让我们一起电竞

DIAN JING

酱子贝

ZIJIANG BEI

I Can Do It

Title: I Can Do It (我行让我上)

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Chapters: 134 + 4 extras + 7 side story chapters

Raws | **NU** | **Guide to JJWXC** | **Audio Drama**

*****TL WILL BE REMOVED ON DEC 1 DUE TO OFFICIAL LICENSE*****

[No retranslations allowed, thank you.]

Summary: For a certain LoL competition, a certain online streamer famous for pissing people off was currently explaining and broadcasting it at the same time.

Streamer: This support, so trash.
Streamer: If that jungler was my teammate, I would already be idling at the fountain and playing piano for him by now.
Streamer: I recommend that this player go back and properly practice how to last hit.

Audience: What bullshit! If you're any better, then you do it!
Streamer: I, your dad, really can do it.
Audience: Okokok ☺ If you can do it then I'll chop off my head so you can kick it.

A few months later, the LPL's[1] veteran pro team TTC announced a new mid laner. A boy with flashy blue hair appeared in front of the audience and played Zed to utter perfection, killing everyone he saw, causing all the female fans to begin toeing the line of infidelity.
During the MVP interview after the match, everyone held their breath and eagerly watched this newcomer.

Only to see the boy accept the microphone, smile and ask, "That water friend[2] with the StarTV user ID 'Suburb King 101,' my team's address is on the official website, when will you be mailing your head over?"

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After a certain regular season match finished, the staff member went backstage to urge the team members to go onstage and conduct their interviews, only to see TTC's new mid laner and jungler standing in the corner.

TTC's number one ace · jungler daddy Road pressed their team's new mid laner Soft against the wall. He lowered his eyes and asked slowly, "In the interview later, do you know what to do?"

That quick-tempered mid laner, who had solidified his image as a troll[3] in the audience's eyes the very first time he went on stage, was currently blushing completely red. "I know. I won't curse at anyone… I definitely won't curse at anyone."

Lu Boyuan[4] (gong) x Jian Rong[5] (shou)

Translation Notes

1. *LPL: League of Legends Pro League, the top pro league for LoL in China.* ^
2. *水友: literally water friend, but used to refer to netizens commenting under the same post or the audience/fans of an online streamer (don't really know an English equivalent, so I'll leave it as water friends most of the time)* ^
3. *喷子: basically an internet troll or a hater* ^
4. *路/Road: The Lu in Lu Boyuan literally means road in Chinese, hence his LoL username.* ^

5. *茸/Rong: The Rong in Jian Rong's name can mean soft and fluffy (especially of hair, which is fitting because Jian Rong's hair is soft and fluffy, and so is Jian Rong deep inside). This could be why his LoL username is Soft, but it's unclear.* ^

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ICDI Chapter 1: TTC · Road

*****TL WILL BE REMOVED ON DEC 1 DUE TO OFFICIAL LICENSE*****

November 2nd, five o'clock in the afternoon, there was a fine drizzle in Shanghai.

The area outside Shanghai's Oriental Sports Center was filled with people holding banners and LED signs printed with e-sport teams' logos. They were currently lining up in an orderly fashion to enter the arena, and every person's face was filled with excitement and anticipation. The rain didn't seem to affect them at all.

Today, the semifinals for LoL's S10 World Championship Series were being held here. The two teams participating in the competition were the HT team from South Korea's LCK division and the TTC team from China's LPL division.

The team who emerged victorious here would receive the opportunity to participate in the World Championship finals next week.

Since TTC had the home ground advantage, just from a cursory glance around, one could see that nearly all the merch the fans were holding were printed with TTC's crown logo.

A bus pulled to a stop at the right side of the stadium, and a white crown logo was printed on the body of the gleaming black bus. Seeing that, security quickly stood up to do their jobs, blocking all the media and fans who wanted to rush up and crowd around the bus door.

The door of the bus opened slowly, and TTC's members disembarked one by one, smiling as they waved or nodded amidst the fans' screams.

When the last member got off the bus, the surrounding screams clearly grew even louder, and the fans waved their LED signs even more energetically.

With many people, it was hard to prevent an accident from occurring. A sign with TTC written on it suddenly fell to the ground, followed closely by a girl's shriek and the sound of security yelling at her to stop.

The girl said anxiously, "Sorry, sorry… someone pushed me just now, I'm really sorry. Can you help me pick up the LED sign? Please."

The security guard said, "I'll help you pick it up in a bit, back up a little…"

Right after the security guard said that, someone bent down and picked up the sign before handing it over.

The man who picked it up was wearing a black and white uniform. His hair was a little casually messy, and if you looked closely, you could see that there was an impression left behind at the corner of his slender and narrow eye from sleeping while leaning against something. Below that was a tall and straight nose and thin lips that were slightly pursed.

The girl looked at him for a few seconds, dazed, before she looked down at the LED sign he was handing over.

His fingers were long and slim, and there was an inconspicuous mole between his thumb and index finger.

The girl blankly accepted the sign. “Thank you…”

The man gave a tiny nod before he turned around and walked into the competition arena.

The girl only absent-mindedly collected her thoughts after the image of the man’s back had completely disappeared.

She tightly hugged her sign before suddenly spinning around and grabbing the clothing of her friend next to her. She screamed excitedly, “That was Road! God Lu! God Lu nodded at me!! And he even touched my sign, ahhh __”

Backstage in the break room, everyone in TTC evidently looked much more relaxed.

TTC’s support, Xiao Bai, sat down in a chair and took out a mirror to examine the hairstyle that he had messed with for a long time before leaving. “That girl’s voice just then was way too powerful. The reason China’s soccer team didn’t win championships is definitely because they were lacking her support.”

The team’s manager and coach smacked his head firmly with his notebook. “Don’t speak nonsense.”

The coach then turned to look at Lu Boyuan, or Road, who had just sat down. Lu Boyuan held his phone in his left hand and was scrolling down the screen. His right hand was propped against the armrest of the chair, and he was currently lightly curling and uncurling his fingers.

Half an hour before the competition began, the coach started to give everyone pre-match guidance.

At the very end, the coach glanced at the team's mid laner and abruptly called him out. "Kan, you remember everything I told you before, right?"

The person who was called out took half a second to respond. "Ah… oh, of course I remember. I won't make the same mistake as before."

Lu Boyuan swept a glance at Kan. After the coach finished saying everything, Lu Boyuan stood up and said, "Going to the bathroom."

As the water rushed over his hands, it brought a bone-chilling coldness with it.

——"Can you do it?"

Hearing that voice, Lu Boyuan lifted his head and looked through the mirror at the coach standing behind him.

A few seconds later, Lu Boyuan turned off the tap and drew out some paper towels to dry his hands. Calmly, he met the coach's gaze. "As long as I'm allowed to go up, I can win."

—

StarTV's LoL livestream channels. Currently, the official broadcast room already reached over 800 million popularity points, solidly occupying first place among the other LoL channels. Following behind were the channels of previous professional players who began streaming after retiring.

As far as one could see, all the streaming room names were worded with titles like “S10 Semifinals,” “Passionate Commentary,” “TTC Must Win.”

On the first page of rankings, the room name at the very bottom of the list became a breath of fresh air.

[taking a lazy day. —Soft]. The livestream room had 130 million popularity points.

Jian Rong came back carrying takeout. When he saw that the host was still chatting away in the livestream, he unwrapped the takeout packaging.

Since it was raining outside, the takeout was almost half an hour late, and he was absolutely starving.

[No way no way, you’re making us sit here and watch you eat takeout?]

[Inactive livestream, reported.]

[Whatcha eating?]

“*Zhajiangmian*.” Jian Rong just woke up not too long ago, so he spoke lazily. “If I’m not full, how will I have the strength to explain things for you guys?”

[Okok, eat some more, I’m afraid you won’t have the energy to flame people later.]

[Left the LoL pit for many years, I want to ask who is this streamer? Why so popular? Is he also a retired player? So handsome?]

[This is a LoL streamer famous for pissing people off.]

[Dirty mouth streamer.]

[Noob streamer.]

“Room mod, please block the one who called me a noob… never mind, I’ll block them myself.” Jian Rong put down his chopsticks and arranged a speaking ban package for the person who called him a noob.

After chatting casually with the audience for a while, the two teams finally went on stage to prepare for the match.

Jian Rong sat cross-legged on the gaming chair, holding the bottom of the takeout container with one hand. His chewing slowed down a bit as his gaze unconsciously floated over towards the person sitting second from the left.

TTC’s jungler Road had already taken a seat and was currently adjusting his equipment. It seemed like he had just washed his face, as the tips of his bangs were a bit wet.

The broadcast started to give each player a close-up shot. When it was Road’s turn, the camera clearly lingered a bit longer on him than the others, and the commentator immediately changed the subject to Road.

Commentator A gave an introduction. “Next up, the camera is focused on TTC’s, and I could even say our LPL’s, ace jungler, TTC · Road! God Lu is as handsome as ever today.”

Commentator B, “That’s right, and what’s more, he doesn’t look nervous at all.”

“As expected of TTC’s stabilizing rock. Wherever he sits, I feel especially at ease.” Commentator C laughed, and as the camera’s focus changed, he said, “However, the mid laner Kan seems to be quite tense today.”

Commentator B, “A little bit. Reasonably speaking, he shouldn’t be though. He’s already fought in the World Championship four times now. I hope that Kan adjusts quickly and does his best to relax before the game starts.”

Jian Rong glanced over the barrage and swallowed his noodles before answering, “Who do I think will win? Dunno, depends on the condition of the teams. If TTC wins, will I send red envelopes? It’s not like I’m TTC’s brand ambassador, why would I send out red envelopes if they win? … is Kan stronger or am I stronger? I am.”

His long-time fans instantly sent out a cascade of “666[1].” They had long since grown accustomed to Soft’s style.

Soft entered the livestreaming platform two years ago, and he had exploded in popularity just a few months after joining. There were many reasons for it, but if one had to pick the most important ones, it would be: one, he was strong and his stream quality was high, and two, his personality was arrogant and he dared to say almost anything.

But there were also a few new audience members who still didn’t like it.

[You can only run your mouth in a livestream anyway.]

[You think that you're all that just because you solo killed Kan a few times? Kan is a farming-team-fight type player, not like you, the kind of idiot who plays Child Zed and Scammer Suo[2].]

"I don't know what a 'farming-team-fight type player' is. All I know is that the winner is the one who can kill the other person and send them back home." Jian Rong said, "Who made that compilation of me solo killing Kan while playing ranked last time? Share a copy with this fan."

[…is this streamer really this conceited? A Kan anti?]

[Nope, don't misunderstand, he's like this towards everyone, not just your Kan. But Kan really has been pretty trash this season.]

[For the time being, I really can't think of a famous player that hasn't been roasted by Soft before.]

[There is one! He's never roasted Road before!]

"Enough, the match is starting." Jian Rong interrupted the barrage's rhythm and adjusted the location of his streaming interface on the screen. "Is this video window covering up the competition interface? I'll close it for a while."

[Close it my ass! This old lady came just to see your face! If you close it I might as well go watch the official broadcast!]

[Don't close it, I'm depending on that blue-colored thing on your head to keep me awake.]

When Jian Rong just started streaming, he had once been placed by the livestream administrator into the “Beauty category” because he was too good-looking.

His skin was fair, his eyelashes were thick and long, his eyes were even brighter than a girl’s, and there was a tiny mole to the right of his nose. As long as you muted him and went to look at the person in the video, you would discover that he was at most seventeen or eighteen years old.

But the main reason Jian Rong got placed into the “Beauty category” was because he had dyed all of his hair blue.

The aqua blue color contrasting against his skin made him seem even paler, and it felt like he could spin around and debut as soon as you placed a mic over his ears.

However, Jian Rong didn’t stay in the Beauty category for very long, precisely because a complaint had been filed against him after he insulted the audience. After being complained to several dozen times in a row, the administrator obediently put him back in the LoL category.

All in all, the mental endurance ability of the little brothers and sisters in the Beauty category was still too weak.

Jian Rong’s statement just then obviously wasn’t actually seeking the audience’s opinions. After he finished talking, he swiftly closed the video.

With the video on, he didn’t even feel comfortable eating.

He ignored the barrage's protests and completely got rid of the video interface before he concentrated on watching the match.

The competition used a BO5 format, five games and three victories. Not only did it test the players' strength, it even more so tested their mental fortitude and endurance. But none of the people sitting on stage were new to the professional scene; every person was in a very stable condition.

In the first game, TTC targeted the enemy's top lane and successfully counterganked[3] the enemy jungler twice, easily seizing the win in just thirty-five minutes.

In the second game, TTC's bot lane created a huge advantage from the start and was the first to break through to the enemy base from the bot lane. But because Kan died twice in a row from sneak-attacks, he gave the other team an opportunity, and unfortunately TTC lost the game after forty-five minutes.

The score was 1:1.

The barrage flew by furiously. Everyone was roasting Kan for being trash, and there were also a few people who asked Jian Rong why he wasn't insulting Kan anymore.

"Got tired of insulting." Jian Rong looked at the stats from the previous game and said, "8,300 damage… in forty-five minutes, he only did 8,300 damage. If I put a Rift Scuttler in the mid lane, the Rift Scuttler would do even more damage than him."

[All you ever know how to do is bbbbb[4] in the livestream room, if you're that great then you do it!]

"If you're that great then you do it" – Jian Rong could see that phrase in the barrage thousands of times in one day.

He was too lazy to respond, and he leaned back in the gaming chair to pay attention to the third game.

If one were to say that Kan was still being reasonably trash in the first two games, then in this game, after Kan flashed mistakenly and became first blood for no good reason in the first five minutes, he was truly abnormally trash.

But luckily Road pulled through as always. In the mid-late game, he used Camille's ganking advantage to kill the other side quite a few times in a row with TTC's top laner, managing to secure the win with much difficulty.

The fourth game was even longer.

Kan finally behaved properly for once in the early game, and nothing happened in the laning phase. But during the team fight phase in the mid-late game, he actually ended up sacrificing his teammates and fleeing with half health twice.

Perhaps some players who weren't skilled enough might feel that Kan running away twice was excusable, but Jian Rong knew very well that if Kan had done enough follow-up damage during those two team fights, he could have completely taken down two or even three people from the other team.

Never mind a professional player, if a Platinum-rank player fought in such a team fight, not even they could possibly choose to betray their teammates and run away.

After fifty-two minutes, TTC lost the fourth game, and the score was 2:2. It was the match point for both sides.

The moment the fourth game ended, Road stood up and walked backstage without looking back once; he didn't spare a single glance at Kan, who was sitting beside him.

[Why isn't the streamer saying anything anymore?]

[My empathy is too strong, I already helped Road beat up that piece of crap Kan.]

[The streamer actually hasn't insulted Kan for two entire games now!]

Jian Rong was quiet for a short while, all the way until the camera focused on Kan.

Kan was a big, tall, and slightly pudgy fellow, and he had a clean appearance, one that seemed very easy-going. At that moment, his head was lowered, and he wore an extremely remorseful expression.

"You guys, take a guess at what he's currently thinking?" Jian Rong suddenly spoke.

[Must be sad, after all he's getting old, he's already 24 this year. Both his APM[5] and mind can't compare with a younger person's anymore…]

[Kan wasn't all that great even when he was young, OK? The most useless one in the team is him.]

[Hater, watch your words, Kan has also helped the team win quite a few times before.]

The barrage fought noisily, before finally Jian Rong interrupted it with a single sentence. "My guess is that he's thinking… 'I acted so well during the last two games, I'm going to have to make the gambling banker give me some more money later.'"

After he said that, the antis and fans alike were shocked, and the barrage was instantly full of question marks.

The meaning behind Jian Rong's words were very clear: he was secretly mocking Kan for putting on a show and cooperating with gambling bankers.

Naturally, after the LoL competitive scene grew to its current scale, it was impossible to avoid its fate of being used as gambling fodder. Many teams had been suspected of "matchfixing" before, but that was all just the audience's private roasting. No one would say it publicly.

As soon as Jian Rong said that, his screen was basically filled with comments attacking him.

[Usually, when you badmouth a player it can be taken as a joke, but now that you're slandering someone's reputation, that's a little much.]

[I fucking called and reported you, this streamer is so disgusting]

[Saying this kind of thing without any evidence at all, okay…]

Jian Rong couldn't be bothered to argue with the barrage. Watching the last four games made his head hurt, so he decided he might as well get up and grab a can of iced coffee from the fridge.

By the time he was back, the starting roster for both teams had been announced for the fifth game.

There were two substitutes for TTC. One was the substitute mid laner, swapping out Kan, who was in a "poor condition."

The other was the substitute jungler, swapping out the team's backbone, Road.

Translation Notes

(press the "^" to go back to your spot in the chapter!)

1. *666: Chinese slang for great/awesome/amazing* ^
2. *Derogatory term to refer to the champions Zed and Yasuo* ^
3. *Counterganking: ganking is essentially a surprise attack on an enemy champion, usually in coordination with the jungler to outnumber/overpower the enemy. Counterganking is when you try to gank and the other team ends up ganking you. Here's a good explanation for both* ^
4. *bbbbb as in spew BS/flame others* ^
5. *APM: actions per minute; measurement for hand speed* ^

Yan: Thank you for reading the first chapter of ICDI! I'm super excited to be translating this novel, and I hope everyone enjoys reading it as much as I did. There's a lot of gaming terms in ICDI, especially about LoL, but I'll do my best to explain them in the translator notes. I also do not play LoL (though I feel like I might as well play after all the research I've done lmao) so if there are any glaring mistakes, please point them out to me~ Some things might get lost in translation from Chinese to English gaming terms, but I'll do my best to keep it consistent with the gaming slang I know.

Wei: Hi, I'll be editing ICDI! I'm reading this novel along with all of you, so I'm really excited to see where it goes. The website is still in the works so if anyone has any recommendations or suggestions (especially for handling footnotes haha) please let us know!

We have a discord if you'd like to chat with us or get update notifications~

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ICDI Chapter 2: Not arguing with a troll over what's right and wrong.

As he watched two unfamiliar-looking players come on stage wearing TTC's team uniform, Jian Rong momentarily forgot to drink the canned coffee that he had just opened. Question marks swept wildly across the barrage to the point that Jian Rong's computer even lagged for a few seconds.

Never mind the audience, even the two TTC substitute players who just took the stage—especially the one replacing Road—seemed to look a little perplexed.

All three commentators wore awkward and puzzled smiles as they exchanged looks with each other.

"TTC… must have some tactic in mind, right?" Commentator A stiffly tossed out a new topic.

After receiving his colleague's signal, another person quickly nodded. "They definitely must have practiced some new ultimate maneuver. But if I'm not remembering incorrectly, this should be the first time TTC's substitute jungler has ever gone on stage?"

"That's right. This jungler is also very powerful, and he's a player excellent at engaging in team fights."

The game hadn't officially started yet, and Jian Rong didn't want to listen to the commentators' cringey conversation, so he muted the official broadcast. He asked, "When did TTC get a substitute jungler?"

Actually, this already wasn't the first time TTC's substitute jungler had been brought up as a subject of conversation.

As early as the competition enrollment period, fans had discovered that there was an unfamiliar face at the very bottom of TTC's roster. Rumor had it that he was a jungler who came straight from the youth training team. Because of that incident, TTC's official Weibo had been blown up by the fans before—to be more exact, it had been blown up by Road's fans before.

After all, TTC possessed the ace jungler Road. Ever since Road joined the team, TTC's substitute roster had never once arranged for a jungler.

[This sub seems to have been here since the summer season.]

[If the mid sub had gone up last match, maybe TTC would have had a higher chance of winning.]

[This substitute jungler is finally here, after sitting on the bench for an entire season. If he didn't show up soon I was gonna assume that TTC just grabbed him to make up for team numbers.]

[Just what kind of ultimate maneuver does TTC have, curious.]

Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow and didn't say anything.

Even if TTC really did have some mysterious trick up their sleeve, there was still no reason for them not to use Road and instead make a substitute who had never gone on stage before cooperate with the team.

His phone rang briefly, and Jian Rong unmuted the official broadcast before he openly picked up his phone and slacked off.

[Shiliu[1]: Big bro, how the hell do you have the guts to say whatever you want?]

Shiliu was one of Jian Rong's few close friends, and he was also a male streamer on StarTV. He played LoL before, but now he had changed lanes and was messing around in the PUBG channel.

[R-ong[2]: What about it?]

[Shiliu: You actually implied that Kan is matchfixing in front of millions of people?? Are you not afraid of his fans going after you?]

[R-ong: I'm not even afraid of the man himself, why would I be scared of his fans?]

Shiliu originally wanted to reply with a "you're so awesome," but then he remembered that his friend seemed to have always been this awesome.

[Shiliu: You should just restrain yourself a little bit, I really am afraid that one day these LPL players are gonna band together and hire a contract killer to go after you.]

[R-ong: I didn't roast Kan, I was praising him just then.]

[Shiliu: …… wdym?]

[R-ong: Before, though he was still trash, at least he was at Diamond-rank level. But his plays today, there's no way to pull those off unless he had a

blood clot in his brain for ten years. If I say he's matchfixing, aren't I just secretly praising him by saying he should be much stronger than the way he was performing?]

"…" Shiliu put away his phone with a wooden expression. Forget it, he wasn't going to argue with a troll over what was right and wrong.

Jian Rong's thought process was correct. TTC hadn't prepared any "ultimate maneuvers," at least not for this match.

Five minutes in, TTC's jungler was solo killed while strolling in the jungle.

Twelve minutes in, TTC's jungler went to the mid lane to gank, but ended up being counterganked, and the enemy got a double kill.

With the pillar of the team and two starting players off the stage, the other three starters were also clearly unsettled. Adding on the fact that they couldn't cooperate very well as a team, when the first big team fight erupted at twenty minutes, TTC's entire team wiped.

Jian Rong glanced at the gap in economy between the two teams and knew that there was no way TTC would be able to make a comeback this game, so he didn't feel like wasting his breath explaining anymore. He opened the barrage helper in the livestream room, wanting to have some "friendly interactions" with the water friends[3].

[TTC is so fucking trash.]

[Why isn't the streamer flaming anyone?]

[I finally know why this jungler sub never played a single time last season. Is TTC crazy, putting him on stage at semifinals to disgust people? Road played so well during the last few games, why switch out?]

[Forget it, Road is also a noob, all TTC players are noobs. How well has Road even played these past few years, he should just hurry up and retire.]

Jian Rong moved his finger and blocked the last person who was cursing. The person swiftly opened a side account and rolled back in, stronger than ever.

[I just flame a tiny bit and you block and kick me? Aren't you also badmouthing players all the time, why don't you block yourself?]

"If you put me in a bad mood, I'll block you. If you don't like that, then hold it in." Jian Rong was too lazy to explain more. There was no logic needed for confrontations between haters; all one needed to do was piss off the other side first.

He leaned back in the chair and chose a comfortable position before continuing. "The substitute jungler is useless, but since the deciding game for the semifinals is his first time ever playing, it's still excusable for him to not play very well, right? You can tell that he probably practices very little with the starters in private. And also, it's not like the rest of the team is playing all that well either. Just think of it as watching a Diamond ranked game.

"Though the substitute mid laner is alright. He's barely a tiny bit more useful than Kan was in the previous four games… of course he's still not as

strong as me, don't ask that kind of nonsense."

Thirty-two minutes in, the deciding game that everyone was anticipating finally neared its end.

In that game, TTC was almost completely crushed.

At the end of the match, HT forced their way to TTC's fountain and spawn camped[4] them for almost thirty seconds.

At that moment, TTC's break room was dead silent.

The competition staff members were affected by the atmosphere and didn't even dare to breathe too loudly. They dedicated themselves to their jobs and filmed while carrying their cameras, giving quite a few close-ups to Road, who was sitting on the sofa.

Road watched the screen calmly, his right hand propped casually on the sofa's armrest. He wore his team jacket loosely, the sleeve engulfing his entire palm.

Kan sat in the very corner. He chewed on his bottom lip repeatedly before he finally couldn't bear it any longer after seeing his teammates be spawn camped by the enemy. He looked at Lu Boyuan and said, "Captain, I even said that I could play this round."

It was as if Lu Boyuan couldn't hear what he was saying; he didn't even spare a single glance his way.

Kan, "Even though I didn't play very well before, but…"

“Enough.” The coach interrupted him with a dark face. “Don’t say anything else.”

A few minutes later, TTC’s team members returned to the break room. Their heads were lowered and they looked at the ground. It was like an invisible rope was wrapped around each of their necks, stifling them so they couldn’t speak or express any other emotions.

It wasn’t that they had never lost a competition before, but this time they had lost too completely, too shamefully. Even the older team members who had experience playing in a few World Championships couldn’t help but feel their eyes redden.

The coach breathed in deeply a few times and comforted them simply a little before walking out to the balcony and calling the team bus. The fans were stirred up right now, so he had to tell the competition management to arrange for a few more security guards to maintain order.

In this stagnant silence, Lu Boyuan finally moved.

He picked up the baseball cap next to him and nonchalantly put it on. The brim of the hat was pressed a little low, and he said, “Time to go back.”

The team members stood up after he said that and began to walk stiffly out.

TTC’s substitute jungler was a seventeen year old boy who had been scooped out from the trainees by management the moment he reached the age he was officially allowed to participate in competitions. He walked at the very back of the crowd, looking dazed, his right hand tightly gripping

the shoulder strap of his equipment bag as he pressed his lips together hard.

He was still quite some distance away from the back exit, but he could already hear the noise from the fans waiting outside the arena. For a brief moment, he suddenly felt as if all the indistinct chatter was peppered with his ID and some jeering, mocking words. He even fantasized that he had already walked outside and was smashed over the head by TTC LED signs until he started bleeding.

Just when he almost couldn't take it anymore and stopped walking, someone patted him firmly on the shoulder twice.

"You've worked hard," Lu Boyuan said. "Practice more after we get back."

It was as if an opening had been created by those two pats, and tears instantly gushed out. He first nodded heavily before he covered his face with his sleeves and couldn't help but sob.

TTC's bus drove straight back to the base.

After disembarking, the coach warned the other team members over and over to uninstall Tieba and Weibo[5] before he went into a meeting room with Road.

"I've already contacted someone from the LPL. They're on their way to the base right now." The coach poured a cup of boiled water and placed it in front of Lu Boyuan. He was silent for a few seconds before he asked, "What if the situation really is like what you're thinking?"

Lu Boyuan said, “Deal with it according to the rules.”

The coach frowned. As someone who had always handled things efficiently, he currently looked hesitant. “Kan, he… he’s been with TTC for seven years, even longer than you or me.”

Lu Boyuan made an “en” noise. “So?”

“Understood.” The coach looked at the untouched paper cup on the table, and his brows wrinkled even more. He asked, “How’s your condition? I’ve rushed the doctor, he’ll be here soon. Tsk… I knew I should’ve made him come to the stadium with us.”

Lu Boyuan extended his arm and exposed his right hand out of the sleeve. “It’s much better now.”

The coach glanced over. “It’s been so long, but it’s still trembling??”

Lu Boyuan said, “The two games in the middle took too long.”

“Don’t mess with me, you could practice for over ten hours a day before, but now you’re telling me that a fifty-minute game is too long? You definitely secretly practiced more!” The coach felt his heart hurt. “Don’t practice these next few days, don’t even open the game, do you hear me??”

Lu Boyuan was well aware of the situation. He really had exceeded the doctor’s set practice time, and by quite a bit as well.

Since there were no upcoming competitions for the time being anyway, Lu Boyuan nodded. “Got it. Have there been any developments in finding a

mid laner?"

"You're already like this, can you worry a little bit less." After the coach finished lecturing, he still answered honestly, "There has. The team recently selected a few mid laners from among the trainees, national rankings, and players whose contracts are about to expire. We still have to inspect and filter through them one by one before we can reach a conclusion."

Lu Boyuan, "Give me a copy of the list too."

"Of course I'll give a copy to you." The coach thought of something and couldn't help but wrinkle his nose. "But there are some things I have to say first. We're looking for a teammate, not a wife. Don't be so picky, you have to give them some room to grow… all those people you rejected last time have been snatched up by other teams by now, it really hurts me…"

Lu Boyuan gave a noise of assent with a cold expression. Inside, he thought, if it were as easy to find a teammate as it was to find a wife, then they wouldn't have to waste so much time doing so.

Translation Notes

(press the "^" to go back to your spot in the chapter!)

1. *Shiliu 石榴 literally means pomegranate, but I'm assuming that's not his friend's actual name? Probably just his online alias, so I'm just gonna go with Shiliu rather than Pomegranate* ^
2. *Jian Rong's user ID is 艹耳, but Cao-Er looks kind of dumb, so I just split up the letters in "Rong," as his ID is technically just the character*

for Rong split up ^

3. *Water friends/水友: a way to address fans or netizens in general, depending on context. If anyone has a better English equivalent please let me know!* ^
4. *EDIT: This used to say Nexus (original t/n: Destroying the enemy's Nexus is the only way to win the game in LoL.) Fountain refers to the spawn point, and spawn camping is the act of killing players as soon as they respawn. To my knowledge, it's kinda BM to do this, especially in the pro scene (though it's a lot more common now in normal play?)* ^
5. *Baidu Tieba and Weibo are both social media sites in China; there's a lot of discussion forums on Tieba and microblogs on Weibo (kind of like Twitter)* ^

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ICDI Chapter 3: No way, you're so trash.

The next afternoon, right after he woke up, Jian Rong saw that he had a few messages on his phone.

[Shiliu: Are you awake yet, big bro?]

[Shiliu: I heard that the platform is about to have a big reform again, restrain yourself a little in your recent livestreams, don't flame so much.]

Jian Rong rubbed his eyes and replied with an "I know," but he didn't take it too seriously.

When the livestream platform reformed this and that, in the end it was all about the same few things. It wasn't like he did anything pornographic or hacked the game, so it shouldn't affect him.

Since it wasn't time to livestream yet, Jian Rong decided to browse Weibo for a bit. He didn't expect to see the same name covering his screen the moment he opened the app.

He only followed blogs related to e-sports on Weibo, so naturally the only things flooding his feed would be topics related to e-sports. There were even a few topics that had already climbed their way onto Weibo's hot search, refusing to come down.

#Road rumored to retire#

#Looking back on Road's five year pro career#

#The end of Road’s legend?#

……

Jian Rong blinked, and some of his sleepiness dispersed.

He flipped over and slowly scrolled down the screen.

The topic of “Road’s retirement” had already climbed to the number one spot on the hot search, even surpassing last night’s semifinals topic. It had an astonishing popularity.

But that was also to be expected. Who was Road? As soon as he joined the team, he had carried TTC, which had just been muddling around in the secondary league for many years, into the LPL. The next year, he seized the World Championship trophy and received the “Most Popular Player” title two years in a row. He was TTC’s pillar, as well as the most popular star player as of late in the LPL competitive division.

Usually, even a little interview about Road could enter the hot search, never mind something huge like retirement.

Some e-sports marketing accounts had already issued articles to stir up the mood. The comments were full of crying and heartbroken emoticons as the fans all expressed their unwillingness to believe the news.

Jian Rong also didn’t really believe it.

There were only a few circumstances under which a professional player would retire—they weren’t scoring well, they weren’t strong enough, or

their APM was declining. Judging from the way Road played yesterday, all three of those circumstances could be directly eliminated.

Jian Rong went to check out TTC's official account. The last thing the official account posted was still the competition report from last night's semifinals.

Road's Weibo was even more tranquil. The most recent sign of movement was a commercial that was posted a month ago.

[Shiliu: Have you gone on Weibo yet? Everyone's saying Road is gonna retire.]

[R-ong: Saw it. Where did the info come from?]

[Shiliu: Seems like it's insider info, apparently Road has a hand injury.]

As Jian Rong brushed his teeth, he recalled Road's expression during the competition last night.

That was the kind of performance someone with a hand injury could pull off??

He randomly clicked on a few of Road's posts. Even though the actual person hadn't said anything yet, the comment section was already full of fans' messages. Of course, there were quite a few anti-fans' attacks mixed in as well.

[Road should've retired long ago, his gameplay was always trash, and last night he was even absent from the deciding game despite being a starter. Did he want to make it easy to shift the blame if they lost? All his fans must

just be fans of his face, right? Who knows how much stronger the new junglers have become in these past two years.]

Jian Rong spat out the toothpaste foam and immediately pressed the forward button.

[Soft: Who's stronger than him, list them out so Dad can take a look.]

—

Only after Lu Boyuan woke up did he find out that he "had been retired."

He washed up simply before he opened the door, only to see a slightly plump little figure sitting guard outside. The image of his back seemed a bit pitiful too.

Hearing a sound, the person instantly looked behind him. It was the team's support, Xiao Bai[1], Lu Boyuan's teammate who joined the team the same year as him.

"*Ge*." Xiao Bai bit his lip, looking as if he wanted to cry but was restraining himself. He asked, mumbling, "… you're going to retire?"

Everyone in the team knew about Lu Boyuan's hand injury. Even though the doctor said that it wasn't yet at the degree where Lu Boyuan could no longer play, everyone was still worrying about it constantly.

Lu Boyuan said, "En."

Xiao Bai was stunned. Countless phrases begging him to stay flew through Xiao Bai's head, but at last, he could only force out a, "Then, then when are

you retiring?"

Lu Boyuan zipped up his jacket. "Two or three years from now?"

Xiao Bai: "..."

"Enough, don't scare him." The coach walked down from upstairs, holding the notebook that never left his side.

Lu Boyuan stuck a hand in his pocket. "How did the information spread?"

"At first, the rumor was about your hand injury, but then someone made an allegation that people from the LPL came over to the base last night... and then it became your retirement." The coach said, "I told Auntie to make breakfast, go down and eat first."

The auntie employed by the base was already used to their working and resting hours. At three in the afternoon, she swiftly prepared breakfast for Lu Boyuan.

After shooing Xiao Bai into the living room, the coach said, "Kan sent me a message."

Lu Boyuan didn't pause while cutting his ham. Kan's messages were part of the several dozen he had received. He had only glanced at the message preview and hadn't opened it. "What did the LPL say?"

"They're still investigating, it won't be so fast." The coach sighed and said, "What if it's us overthinking things..."

Lu Boyuan didn't say anything. For this kind of thing, it would be better to mistakenly attack someone than to let them get away with it. Moreover, if Kan really didn't do it, the LPL couldn't randomly just convict him of a crime either.

"Let's not talk about that anymore." The coach asked, "There's a week of vacation after the competition's over, what are your plans?"

Lu Boyuan, "Stay at the base."

Recently, he had to do a lot of acupuncture and moxibustion, so it wasn't convenient to go home, nor did he want his parents to know about his hand injury.

The coach nodded. "Okay, then I'll tell Auntie to come over punctually to prepare meals for you."

"No need, I'll get by on my own." Lu Boyuan picked up a napkin and wiped his mouth. "Do you have the list?"

The coach pulled out a piece of paper from the notebook. "Here."

There were only six people on the list. Their rank, livestream room number, or previous professional achievements were written next to their IDs, as well as scores for each category that the team's management judged them on.

The coach said, "The team also gathered a few clips of their gameplay. I've watched them all, and I feel like the first two are pretty good. I'll email them to you in a bit."

Lu Boyuan's gaze stopped at the very bottom of the paper, where there was a name that was crossed off by someone using a black pen.

Sensing where his gaze was, the coach explained, "That person is called Soft, I've ruled him out. He's a streamer, I feel like he isn't really suitable."

Lu Boyuan asked, "What about him isn't suitable?"

"Every aspect of him isn't suitable. I was even suspecting whether one of his fans snuck their way into the team." The coach thought a bit before he randomly selected a reason. "The champions that he's best at are all those… Zed, Yasuo, Talon, whatever. In any case, the champions that are always benched during competitions, he likes to play them all."

Every champion in LoL had their own personal backstory and established role. The three champions that the coach listed were all assassins with advantages in agility and burst damage.

Those three characters were all popular choices in pub games[2], and those who could play them well could carry the whole team, but those who couldn't play them well could screw over their teammates until they doubted their entire existence.

As soon as those champs were used in competitions, their weaknesses would be magnified infinitely—short range, bad at poking, overly reliant on their early game dominance, not good at initiating team fights.

In the World Championships, those three assassins had never gone on the competition stage before.

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow after hearing those names.

For those who wanted to play assassin champions well, the requirements for APM and reaction time were both extremely high.

“You can train other champions,” he said.

“That’s true, but…” The coach showed his cards. “I feel like the streamer himself isn’t a good fit for playing professionally.”

Lu Boyuan looked up at him. “He has flaws?”

“Could be considered that.” The coach said, “He’s really just an entertainment streamer. He usually only plays in the Diamond ranks and occasionally even runs over to play Gold games. The people he fights are all at differing skill levels, so it’s impossible to tell how strong he really is. Also, he really enjoys insulting people.”

Then he truly wasn’t suitable. Lu Boyuan asked, “The platform also allows streamers to insult people?”

He remembered last time when Xiao Bai streamed, he said some curse words, and after just a few seconds the livestream room was temporarily sealed by the super admin.

“They don’t, so usually when he insults people he doesn’t use obscenities. And not only does he exchange attacks back and forth with his water friends, he also really enjoys flaming pro players.” The coach paused momentarily. “Let’s put it like this. Out of LPL’s players, he’s flamed every single one of them, except for you.”

Lu Boyuan: "…oh."

Lu Boyuan returned to his computer, carrying the list, and searched for the videos that the coach sent him before watching two games.

Compared to those trainees from before, these players were a bit better, but they were too conformist. There weren't any major problems with their gameplay, but there weren't any highlights either.

After watching for a few more minutes, Lu Boyuan paused the video and turned to ask Xiao Bai, who was sitting next to him, "Do you know Soft?"

Xiao Bai was eating a red bean pie. When he heard that, he stopped chewing. "That bluenette[3] troll streamer who ran over to the beauty category when he just started streaming but ended up being chased back to the LoL category because he insulted people?"

Just by listening to him, you could tell there were some fairly deep grudges.

Lu Boyuan curved his lips. "Yes, him. You actually know quite a lot."

"*Ge*, if you can laugh, it's because you don't know how infuriating that troll is." Xiao Bai said bluntly, "He's provoked too many players, so someone created a forum dedicated just to cursing him out. I heard all about it from there."

Lu Boyuan made an "en" noise. "What level are you in the forum?"

"9…" Xiao Bai said a single number before he shut up. He swallowed his red bean pie and coughed twice as a cover up. "Why are you asking about

him?"

Lu Boyuan said, "Just asking."

Xiao Bai complained, "But recently the people on that forum have become weirder and weirder, I don't even like browsing it anymore."

Xiao Bai unlocked his phone and flipped through the forums he followed before clicking on "SoftBar"[4] and handing his phone to Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan swept a look over it—

[God, how come this trash streamer still hasn't started streaming yet? *Laozi*'s been camping out in front of the computer for half an hour now, my girlfriend isn't even as late as he always is, dammit.]

[I'm also waiting, if I don't insult him for a day then my heart feels all empty inside.]

[I've disliked this dumbass[5] streamer for a long time now. Bros look, am I doing it right? [photo]]

The photo was a gift-giving screenshot of StarTV. On the banner was a row of large words—"Soft Dumbass Streamer sent out a Sea of Stars in Soft's livestream".

Lu Boyuan: "…"

At night, Lu Boyuan finally finished watching all the gameplay videos that the team sent over.

He rubbed his forehead and closed the video playing software before stuffing the list into the desk. When he was closing the drawer, he caught sight of the smudge of black on the paper from the corner of his eye.

A few minutes later, Lu Boyuan opened StarTV's streaming platform and typed Soft into the search bar before smoothly entering the other's livestream room.

The moment he entered the room, he saw that the streamer was currently typing something with his head lowered. From the angle of the camera, the only thing visible was his blue hair, eyelashes, and pale cheeks.

The rapidfire keyboard clacking never ceased. The keyboard, which could light up, turned into nightclub strobe lighting because of his typing.

Lu Boyuan looked at the game interface.

[No Way You're So Trash [The Master of Shadows[6]]: Flaming the support, do you even deserve to hate? Why don't you take a look at your own KDA[7]? Sleepwalking in the jungle, you think you're all that great? If your mom sees your gameplay even she'll have to shout a 'for heaven's sake']

[No Way You're So Trash [The Master of Shadows]: Rolling around in the jungle for an entire thirty minutes, if someone didn't know better they would've thought you were picking out your own grave.]

[No Way You're So Trash [The Master of Shadows]: Just AFK[8] already, stop feeding[9] them, let your dad relax a little this game.]

Right after typing out that sentence, the streamer encountered the enemy support in the jungle. He finally looked up from the keyboard, and after a few seconds, he skillfully and rapidly reaped the enemy support's head.

[Streamer stop flaming stop flaming, this is your promotion series[10]!!!]

"I know." Annoyed by the messy hair prickling his eyelashes, Soft swept a hand through his bangs, revealing a good-looking pair of eyes. "Keep in mind, if you lose in the promo series, you can still keep playing, but if you let a dumbass slip by, then you can never curse them out again, understood?"

Lu Boyuan: "…"

Translation Notes

(press the "^" to go back to your spot in the chapter!)

1. *Xiao Bai is literally Little Bai, it's his nickname* ^
2. *Pub games refers to playing with all random players that you don't know* ^
3. *Bluenette – apparently this is a thing, just refers (in a joking way) to someone with blue hair* ^
4. *The 'ba' in Tieba is equivalent to forum (more or less) or 'bar', so "SoftBar" is basically a forum for Soft's fans* ^
5. *傻逼: this comes up a lot in this novel, and the translation I'm going with is 'dumbass'. It can be used much more vulgarly, but in this case JR and co use it in a more 'friendly bantering' manner. It's also not quite considered a swear word in Chinese (bc of the censored 'bi') so*

I'm guessing that's why it passes the streaming platform's censors. Just know that there are much more offensive insults out there than this lmao ^

6. *The title for Zed* ^
7. *KDA: kill/death/assist ratio* ^
8. *I'm assuming 挂机 is roughly equivalent to AFK (away from keyboard)/idling* ^
9. *Feeding is essentially sending yourself to the enemy and 'feeding' them your deaths for easy kills/gold; it's really easy for a champion to get super buffed if you keep feeding* ^
10. *Currently in LoL to progress from tier to tier (i.e. platinum to diamond) or division to division (plat 4 to plat 3) you'll have to play a set of games called "promotion series" once you reach 100 LP (league points). It's BO3 within a tier and BO5 between tiers, and by winning you get promoted* ^

Yan: I am so sorry for the excessive amount of translation notes hahahaha ;;; there's a lot of gaming terms in this chapter so I just wanted to explain them all in case anyone was super confused. It'll go down eventually I swear!!! Jian Rong's flaming comments always make me laugh

Wei: Lol I love JR's logic–is he wrong though...

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ICDI Chapter 4: …Road is generous.

Lu Boyuan rotated his wrist and was about to exit the livestream, but his phone rang first.

Ding-*ge*[1] instantly asked, “Why did you run over to Soft’s livestream?!”

Lu Boyuan frowned before he looked up after a few seconds at the upper right corner of the streaming interface.

Only to see, in the user login area, several large letters shining brightly—TTC · Road.

Lu Boyuan was silent for a brief moment before he explained simply, “Forgot to switch accounts.”

“I told you not to log in to your main account normally, it’s not like you need to livestream these days either… Is that the important part!!” Ding-*ge* said, “Right now the marketing accounts are all posting on Weibo and stirring things up!”

Lu Boyuan said, “What is there to stir up? I’m watching a livestream, that’s all.”

“That’s all? Whose livestreams have you watched before? You don’t even enter your teammates’ livestream rooms.” Ding-*ge* paused for a bit before he gathered the strength to weakly continue, “And also… Soft was commentating on the semifinals in his livestream last night.”

Lu Boyuan recalled his teammates' sleepwalking gameplay last night and understood what Ding-*ge* meant. Soft probably didn't have many good things to say when commentating.

Ding-*ge*: "In front of several hundred thousand people, that brat said that Kan had been bribed by gamblers."

Lu Boyuan: "…"

"He really is quite audacious. If Kan intended to press charges, Kan would win for sure." Ding-*ge* expressionlessly repeated what the marketing accounts were saying. "Now all these marketing accounts are saying that you're going to stand up for your teammates."

The marketing accounts were being a little excessive, but nobody could actually come up with a different reason for why Road would appear in Soft's livestream.

The other end of the line was silent. Ding-*ge* sighed and was about to speak when he heard a very quiet, low laugh.

He was astonished. "What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing." Lu Boyuan restrained his laughter and said, "Then, if I log out right now, wouldn't that really make it seem like I came to threaten him?"

Ding-*ge* was momentarily stunned. "What do you mean? Why exactly did you go to his livestream room?"

“Just to take a look.” Lu Boyuan said, “It’s fine, I’ll take care of it myself. Hanging up now.”

Jian Rong didn’t know what had happened. He only knew that the livestream’s barrage had exploded to the point that it was affecting his game.

This computer was something his dad left behind, and its configuration could only be considered average. It could stream with difficulty, but it lagged easily if there were too many special effects from gifts.

He didn’t even need to look at the barrage helper to know what these people were arguing noisily about. “Don’t ask, I’m not getting a new computer, no money.”

His team’s jungler had already been roasted to the point that he was AFK, and he was even threatening to make Jian Rong lose points in the chat box.

Seeing the other person’s threats, Jian Rong laughed mockingly. “When dealing with this kind of person, not only do you have to insult him until he AFKs, you also have to win after he decides to AFK, so that he clearly recognizes the fact that he’s a useless piece of trash.

“To piss off this dumbass, I’m going to temporarily turn off the barrage. There shouldn’t be any complaints, right? … okay, there’s none, I’m turning it off.”

Jian Rong ignored the countless question marks in the barrage and swiftly turned off the barrage helper before he focused on playing the game.

Actually, Jian Rong very rarely flamed strangers.

For the quality of the stream, he frequently played in the Platinum and Diamond ranks on his side account, and the players he encountered were all decent anyway.

Occasionally, there would be someone in the team who would die over and over, and after the other three players gave their greetings to the player's entire family[2], Jian Rong would even send out a "don't flame anymore, I'll carry."

But the jungler he encountered this match was truly a worthless good-for-nothing.

The events leading up to the incident had nothing to do with Jian Rong. Their team's support went back to the base because of low health, so she was a bit late in coming to provide assistance in the team fight.

The result of the team fight was also still acceptable. On their side, their jungler and ADC[3] had died, but Jian Rong killed off three champions on the other side, and they hadn't lost any resources in the jungle.

Then the jungler began to attack the support, saying things like, "*Just seeing that the gender on the support's profile is female makes me want to quit the game*", "*You knew perfectly well we had to team fight yet you still went back to the base*", "*What version of this game still plays with sustain support Lulu, it's clear that she's just a rank-climbing whore.*"

The support replied back with a few insults, but the girl couldn't curse out anything too vicious. After seeing her responses, the jungler went after her

even harder, his swears growing more and more vulgar.

After it developed into personal attacks, Jian Rong sent the enemy mid laner back home with a combo before he stopped in place and initiated a "friendly exchange" with this jungler. In the end, it became this spectacle.

At the current moment, Jian Rong was the only person on his team with the advantage. His teammates' scores were all along the lines of 0/2/0[4], 0/4/3, while his own score was 7/2/0. Since he had quite a few kills, he had gold rewards on him, making him the enemy's target.

Jian Rong moved his champion to the middle lane and saw that the enemy mid Kassadin was currently clearing minions.

There weren't many ways to obtain gold in the game. One way was to kill champions, and the other way was to kill monsters and the enemy's minions.

"Their jungler is here." Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow and gave an analysis for his water friends with a matter-of-fact tone of voice. "Why else would he dare touch my minions."

Even though he said that, he still edged closer to the middle lane.

And then, right in front of the enemy jungler's eyes, he solo killed the enemy mid laner's Kassadin.

Kassadin's ultimate ability[5] was a blink skill. It was as if Jian Rong knew when he was going to escape, and at the last moment before he could flee, Jian Rong used his own ult on him, utilizing the burst damage from all his

unerring skills in the previous two seconds to beautifully accomplish a solo kill.

He then slipped into the jungle and ran away. The chain of skills was very natural and streamlined, not the slightest bit sluggish.

He didn't expect to encounter the enemy top laner and support the moment he entered the jungle. The enemy support was playing Thresh, a champion that had very strong CC[6] and could both pull and slow. Jian Rong used his blink skill to easily dodge the enemy's slow skill. The enemy was full of killing intent and immediately tossed out a flash to come up and throw out his scythe, managing to tether Jian Rong with great difficulty.

Unexpectedly, before the scythe's pull special effect could even materialize, Jian Rong used his equipped Quicksilver Sash to instantly remove the CC on him, astonishingly fast.

Before the enemy and audience could recover, he had already escaped without even looking back.

Prior to leaving, he also gave an experienced, asshole-y flash of his Mastery Emote[7] to the other side.

[[All] Baby He Hit Me (Kassadin): ?????]

[[All] Baby He Hit Me (Kassadin): Big bro, save me some face, the jungler is my wife. You've solo killed me three times in front of her already.]

[[All] No Way You're So Trash (The Master of Shadows): Okay.]

After that, Jian Rong really didn't go after Kassadin anymore.

He turned around and invaded the enemy jungle before ganking the enemy jungler three times.

[[All] Baby He Hit Me (Kassadin): Dammit, she went offline because you killed her so much! It would've been better if you fucking came to kill me!]

As Jian Rong purchased equipment, he said, "Why is this couple so hard to please?"

Maybe because Jian Rong spoke up for the support, ever since the jungler went AFK, the little support would occasionally follow behind him.

But the champion he was playing was extremely agile. He could rush into a crowd and rapidly dispatch the enemy's glass cannon before emerging completely unscathed. There wasn't much use for a support to follow him.

After that happened a few times, Jian Rong couldn't help but type something.

[No Way You're So Trash (The Master of Shadows): Support, go protect the ADC, don't bother with me.]

As if she didn't see it, the support still followed closely behind him, giving him a shield even when he was just fighting a monster.

After 37 minutes, Jian Rong carried the team and won the game with a 16/2/0 score.

Right before they finished taking the enemy's inhibitor[8], Jian Rong rapidly typed something.

[No Way You're So Trash (The Master of Shadows): Did the outcome of this game have anything to do with you, dumbass?]

Upon reaching the post-game screen, the jungler immediately left without saying a single word. It seemed like he was quite angry.

Jian Rong stretched and was about to return to the game lobby when a friend request popped up in the bottom right corner.

It was the support from just then.

Out of habit, he declined and reopened the barrage helper.

The barrage was truly too crowded, so Jian Rong selected a few comments that he could read and answered them.

[Why reject her? Do you know you just missed the chance to have a beautiful and pure online dating affair??]

"I don't add strangers." After saying that, Jian Rong opened the gift list that he had closed before and started to express his thanks.

After he finished reading them aloud, he looked back at the barrage. The topic had already changed, and Jian Rong narrowed his eyes slightly, discovering that he actually couldn't really understand what the barrage was talking about. "?"

[…you're finished, Road himself came to punish you.]

[This dumbass streamer deserves to be taught a lesson, that's what he gets for flaming people all the time!]

[Road brought Kan's lawsuit and came to find you!!]

[Very regretful that I got to know you through this kind of method.]

[Is God Lu really going to retire?? I'm begging you, say something, whether it's life or death just free me already TAT]

[God Lu, your livestream room has already gathered dust…]

[All Netizens Protect Weak Baby Soft (currently just one person)]

"Now what kind of scheme are you guys trying to pull? You think that's enough to scare me?" Jian Rong laughed coldly. "Why don't you guys just straight up say Ma Huateng[9] came to ask me to shoot a commercial for LoL?"

He then leaned back in his chair and looked at takeout options on his phone. Occasionally, he looked up and expressed thanks for new gifts. "Thank you 'I'm That Support From Just Now' for the Little Star, thank you 'TTC · Road' for the Sea…"

Jian Rong: "?"

After realizing what ID he had just said out loud, Jian Rong's taunting smile froze on his face.

In order to prevent fans from being tricked, StarTV prohibited the use of every professional player's name.

Only the players themselves could use the names after providing proof.

Jian Rong slowly moved his neck and saw that there was a dazzling "TTC · Road" sitting on his livestream room's Big Star List. There was also a tiny black and white crown logo behind the name.

TTC had a livestream contract with StarTV, and all the members of the team streamed on this platform. StarTV gave the players enough face; every person's ID had a long string of grand icons behind it, including TTC's personal team logo.

Road, who hadn't appeared anywhere on StarTV for three months, was currently hanging out in Jian Rong's livestream, and had even made it on the money-smashing list.

Jian Rong wasn't the only one who was stupefied. The nearly 300,000 water friends online in the livestream were also stupefied.

[This person just mocked your teammate for matchfixing yesterday, and you come over to smash a gift worth over 10k on him today?]

[…hacker dog? StarTV can't even protect a pro player's account well??]

[Then that hacker dog would have to know not only God Lu's login password but also his payment information…]

[Husband, did your hand slip??]

[What's going on? Didn't I come to see Soft being roasted???]

Road continued to sit on the money-smashing list silently. A few seconds later, another gift special effect leaped up in the livestream.

Before the water friends could crawl out from their thoughts full of question marks, they saw another unimaginable scene—

Only to see Soft, who carelessly nitpicked and bickered with his fans all day long, suddenly put down his propped up legs and sit up perfectly straight, adjusting his previously crooked headphones so that they sat properly on his head. He even lifted a hand and smoothed his disheveled blue hair.

"Thank you Road for the Sea of Stars." The mouse cursor wandered aimlessly around the computer desktop screen. Jian Rong looked as calm as ever, but his gaze swept around erratically, and his voice was a bit lower than usual. "…Road is generous."

Translation Notes

(press the "^" to go back to your spot in the chapter!)

1. *Ding-ge (Ding bro) is the coach.* ^
2. *Meaning they insulted all his family/cursed him out* ^
3. *ADC: attack damage carry. Refers to high damage glass cannon type champions who specialize in ranged attacks; the "bot lane" refers to the ADC usually (though also refers to support).* ^
4. *KDA or KDR (kill to death ratio)* ^
5. *Ultimate ability/ultimate/ult = a champion's strongest, most identifying, and most game-changing ability. A blink skill is a type of movement spell in LoL – teleports and flashes are examples of blinks.* ^

6. *CC: crowd control, or skills that hinder someone's movements, like knockdown, pulls, slows, etc.* ^
7. *Mastery Emote: basically an emote you can unlock the more levels you master for your champion. Flashing it can either be funny or rude, but in this case JR is clearly doing it just to troll by showing off* ^
8. *To get to the enemy's Nexus, you have to go through turrets, inhibitors, and Nexus turrets. By destroying the enemy's inhibitor/inhib, your own minions get a stat boost and become super minions* ^
9. *Ma Huateng is the owner of Tencent, which owns Riot Games, which owns League* ^

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ICDI Chapter 5: Was Road the one on his livestream account?

For once, TTC's base was quiet for the entire day. The semifinals the previous day didn't go well, so nobody was in the mood to play around. After they woke up, everyone either holed up in the living room or in their own room to watch the competition replay or a movie to pass the time.

A series of hasty footsteps interrupted the momentary peace. Xiao Bai charged straight from the living room to the practice room, holding his phone, gasping for air as he shouted, "*Ge*—someone hacked into your livestream account!!"

His *ge* was sitting in front of the computer, his posture a bit relaxed.

When Lu Boyuan sensed the movement, he removed half of his headphones and slowly looked back. "?"

"Someone hacked into your livestream account and they're sending out gifts from it. And they're sending it to that bluenette dumb—" His voice abruptly cut off.

The sky was already dark outside, and the lights in the practice room weren't on, so the only source of light in the room was Lu Boyuan's desktop monitor in front of him. With one hand on the door frame, Xiao Bai squinted and finally managed to make out what was on the monitor. He firmly swallowed the "ass" that he had yet to say back into his stomach.

A familiar livestream interface was displayed on the monitor, and the exaggerated special effects that could only be triggered by a “Sea of Stars” gift floated across the screen.

There was a tiny video at the bottom left corner of the screen. Xiao Bai couldn’t see the face of the person in the video very clearly; he could only see the person’s blue hair, which was even more exaggerated than the special effects.

Xiao Bai: “…”

Lu Boyuan swept a glance over the barrage. All the messages claiming that he came to find Soft to settle accounts were gone.

After he finished listening to Soft’s thanks, he moved his finger and exited the livestream.

The door to their base was pushed open. Ding-*ge* came in carrying a few large bags of midnight snacks and locked eyes with Xiao Bai, who was standing, dazed, in the practice room doorway.

“Come eat midnight snacks.” He shot a look in the direction of the practice room, a pained look on his face. “Call Road too.”

After every competition finished, the club would always give the players a break. But right now, all of TTC’s starters, besides Kan, had stayed at the base.

They sat around the coffee table, which was piled with large and small takeout boxes. Recently, in order to ensure that no mishaps would happen

during the competition season, they had only eaten nutritious meals for who knows how long.

Xiao Bai stared at the crayfish that the young man next to him was holding. He insinuated, "P-baby[1], your crayfish is so plump."

The person sitting next to him was the team's ADC, Pine. He was a twenty year old young man with monolids. His appearance was a little cold, just like his personality.

Pine made an "en" noise. After he peeled off the shell, he popped the meat into his own mouth.

Xiao Bai, "...stingy."

Ding-*ge* came back after taking a phone call. He tossed his phone onto the sofa before he rolled up his sleeves and sat down. "The platform called me to ask if your account was hacked. You're really something else."

Lu Boyuan lowered his head and peeled the crayfish. "I'll switch accounts next time."

Ding-*ge* humphed, not very pleased, before he discovered something else was wrong. "Next time? Why is there a next time??"

Lu Boyuan said, "His reflexes are very fast."

Ding-*ge* was startled. "En?"

"In the entire game, an untargetable skill[2] only hit him one time," Lu Boyuan said.

Actually, in the game just then, his deepest impression was still when Soft seized the opportunity to remove the enemy's CC by using the Quicksilver Sash. It was direct and efficient, and one could almost call it instantaneous.

Even if that happened in a professional arena, it would still be an astonishing maneuver.

But it only happened once. Lu Boyuan wasn't certain whether his reflexes were fast or his luck was just good.

"*Ge*, you just don't know." Xiao Bai wiped his mouth. "That little bluenette stays in the Gold and Platinum ranks all the time, so he fights a bunch of really weak people. In the higher tiers, he would probably get the crap beaten out of him…"

"He wouldn't." A man walked out from the kitchen, carrying a jug of orange juice. It was the team's top laner, Yuan Qian, the big brother of the team. He was a good person and didn't have a temper, and he was somewhat overweight. He poured every person orange juice. "I've played against him before."

Everyone looked at him.

Xiao Bai was flabbergasted. "Qian-*ge*, you've played with that little bluenette before?!"

Yuan Qian said, "Yeah, what's wrong?"

"He's insulted you before in his livestream!" Xiao Bai instantly snitched. "He's also insulted P-baby and Kan. Kan can even be considered his

livestream room's permanent guest."

"I know." Yuan Qian wasn't angry at all. He chuckled, embarrassed. "I really did have some gameplay issues during the matches he was talking about."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Ding-*ge* noticed something else. He said curiously, "He has an account that can even play ranked with you?"

LOL's ranking system was divided into several major tiers: Iron, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond, Master, Grandmaster, and Challenger. Two players had to have similar ranks in order to duo queue together. Challenger and above, you could only solo queue.

Since pro players usually had to practice, they couldn't spare too much energy to play ranked. Currently, the TTC member with the highest rank was Yuan Qian, who had 500 LP in the Korean server's Challenger tier.

The one with the lowest rank was Lu Boyuan, who was in Diamond 4[3]. It was because he hadn't touched ranked games for a long time, causing the system to automatically deduct his points and drop his ranking.

"He does, and not only that, we played together on the Korean server. At that time, I was probably around 100 LP, so I often ran into him. It seems like he always plays on the Korean server whenever he isn't streaming." Yuan Qian recalled something. "Two years ago, his rank was very high, but later, since highly ranked games apparently didn't have a good effect on the livestream, he went to play in the lower tiers."

Xiao Bai pinched his crayfish and, after a long pause, spat out a, "…how tacky."

Lu Boyuan asked, "He liked playing assassins too before?"

"Correct. He was actually pretty well known on the Korean server back then." At that point, Yuan Qian finally realized something. "Why are we suddenly talking about him?"

Ding-*ge* said, "No reason. Weren't we looking for a new mid laner recently… he was on the potential candidate list that the team gave us."

"No way!" Xiao Bai was alarmed. "Absolutely no way! In this team, if he's here then I'm out! If I'm here then he's out! He and I cannot co-exist in the same place!"

Ding-*ge* said, "There's still two years left on your contract with the team, it's not up to you."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Yuan Qian shook his head. "Don't think about it, if that's the case. He most likely wouldn't join."

Lu Boyuan asked, "Why not?"

"Before, a team asked me to convey a message to him, but he immediately declined. He didn't even accept the contact details." Yuan Qian paused. "He said that the newcomer's signing bonus was too low, and that it wasn't as profitable as streaming."

Xiao Bai: "……extremely tacky!"

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and nodded; he didn't ask anything else.

In the first place, he only went to take a look because of a sudden impulse. It wasn't yet to the point where he felt like he extremely wanted the other person.

—

Road came and left quickly. For half an hour after he left the stream, the majority of fans who came after hearing the news stayed.

[How come TTC's official account still hasn't posted a hacked account announcement!!]

[Road probably came to do charity. Paying close attention to an orphan's life, with you and me serving witness.]

[Got off late after work. Bros, what's going on, why is this moron sitting so properly today?]

Jian Rong finished his dinner in two swift bites before he wiped his hands clean with a damp paper towel. Just when the water friends thought that he was going to open the game, he moved his mouse cursor over to today's gift-giver list.

After repeatedly glancing at the number one ID on the gift-giver list, Jian Rong finally nonchalantly opened the game client.

[? Just how many times are you going to look at it??]

[What, do you think ‘TTC · Road’ is going to disappear if you don’t look at the gift-giver list for one second?]

[Why the hell are your ears red! Just like a girl!]

When Jian Rong spotted that comment, he put his headphones back on and covered up his ears before expressionlessly striking back, “You’re the one who’s acting like a girl.”

Eleven at night, Jian Rong ended his livestream on the dot.

After taking a shower, he absentmindedly scrubbed at his hair with a towel while scrolling through the messages that he received while streaming.

[Shiliu: Bro, amazing. Tonight your livestream’s popularity points even surpassed those retired players’ points.]

[R-ong: I’m not the amazing one.]

[Shiliu: It’s all the same, those popularity points must feel extremely good.]

Shiliu was well-known for having many connections. Jian Rong thought a bit before he typed:

[R-ong: Was Road really the one on his livestream account?]

[Shiliu: How about I help you give a call and ask?]

[R-ong: Okay.]

[Shiliu: … okay my ass, I was just joking. Do you think Road’s number is that easy to get!]

[Shiliu: But I do think it was Road himself. Who would dare to randomly login to Road's account?]

[R-ong: … oh.]

[Shiliu: Speaking of which, I received an enormously juicy piece of gossip today!]

[R-ong: What?]

[Shiliu: That night after the semifinals finished, people from the LPL went over to TTC's base, and it seems like they took Kan away!]

[Shiliu: This is my first time hearing about something like this! Why do you think they took him away? It can't be that you really predicted it correctly??]

There was no reply for a long time from the other side. Shiliu was typing out another long analysis into the message box, and just as he wrote the concluding "*matchfixing is more harmful than useful for Kan,*" his phone vibrated.

[R-ong: Idk.]

[R-ong: If the actual person was the one on the account, then why would he send me gifts.]

Shiliu: "?"

[Shiliu: I'm telling you about LPL's most exciting and stunning piece of gossip this year right now, don't make me slap you.]

[R-ong: Oh.]

[R-ong: Did he only enter my livestream room because his hand slipped and he clicked on the wrong thing on the platform's homepage?]

Shiliu wilted, and his desire to share gossip instantly disappeared without a trace. He numbly typed out a reply.

[Shiliu: Idk, he probably wanted to bribe you with gifts so that you'll insult TTC a little less in the future.]

[Shiliu: I finally realized. You're a true fan of Road.]

Jian Rong was about to explain, but he ended up deleting the few words he typed out.

[R-ong: En.]

The fourth day after the semifinals competition, the fans' abuse and ridicule of TTC finally calmed down a little—the S10 World Championships was just a few days away, and LPL's PUD team would be facing off against Korea's HT team. The fans' attention was all directed to PUD instead.

That day, at one in the morning, TTC's base was brightly lit.

LoL's competitions largely took place in the afternoon or at night. The professional players would adjust their own daily routines so that they would maintain the best conditions during those hours.

Since their biological clocks were already used to that kind of lifestyle, everyone still stayed up late even on days with no practice or competitions.

Lu Boyuan sat next to Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian, a jacket draped over his shoulders, observing them as they played ranked.

After the competition finished, everyone had already slowly begun to relax. Today both of them were playing in the national server. Xiao Bai was playing jungler on his Diamond account, and his playstyle could only be described as trash, so the entire time Lu Boyuan was only watching Yuan Qian's monitor.

Another game concluded. Yuan Qian felt like it was hard to play in the Diamond ranks while solo queueing, so he invited a random friend to join his party. The people on his friends list were all either pro players or highly skilled strangers that he met while solo queueing, so they were all extremely capable.

A player with the ID "Just Watch My Gameplay" entered the party lobby.

Yuan Qian clicked on the queue button before he canceled it again after just a few seconds.

He put a hand over his stomach as he opened up the chat box and typed out a "sorry for the inconvenience."

"What's wrong?" Lu Boyuan asked.

Yuan Qian wore a painful expression. "My stomach hurts…"

Lu Boyuan nodded. Just when Yuan Qian was about to send the message, Lu Boyuan stood up from his chair.

“I’ll play for you.” Lu Boyuan said.

“?” Yuan Qian was startled before he quickly shook his head. “No need, it’s not like we’re in queue or anything… and if Ding-*ge* finds out, he’ll scold me.”

Ding-*ge* prohibited Lu Boyuan from playing the game. In order to keep watch, he would even occasionally look through his game scores.

Lu Boyuan was already extremely bored.

He stood there and didn’t move. “I’ll only help you play for a little bit. You can play once you get back.”

Yuan Qian: “…really, no need.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Get up.”

Yuan Qian: “…”

Successfully taking Yuan Qian’s spot, Lu Boyuan asked, “Who’s the teammate?”

“I didn’t look too closely, I just randomly invited someone. I think this person has changed his ID before, you can look at the note[4].” After Yuan Qian said that, he immediately rushed to the bathroom.

Lu Boyuan opened the friends list and took a glance.

Note: Soft.

The other person in the party suddenly spoke.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Clicked the wrong thing, I'm solo Q.]

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: Okay.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Who are you? I'll add a note.]

Even though it had been a long time since Yuan Qian played on the national server, his national server ID still wasn't a secret. Anyone could find it if they searched on the internet.

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: Qian]

Jian Rong, who was about to leave the party, froze.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: TTC's Qian?]

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: En]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Oh…]

Lu Boyuan didn't want to waste any time. Seeing that Soft still wasn't leaving, he decided to withdraw first.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Then how about we play a few games together? You're trying to get into Challenger, right? I'll carry you up.]

His words were both self-confident and arrogant.

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: Sure]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: But you have to answer one of my questions first, bro]

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: ?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: A few days ago… on Monday, was Road the one on his livestream account?]

—

The author has something to say:

Soft: Online waiting for a response, a little nervous.

Translation Notes

(press the "^" to go back to your spot in the chapter!)

1. *Xiao Bai calls Pine P-bao, like bao bei/babe/darling* ^
2. *There are targetable skills and untargetable skills (like AOEs/area of effect attacks). LBY isn't saying that JR wasn't hit by any targetable skills (I'm assuming that would be almost impossible), but he did avoid almost all the untargetable skills, which is still impressive* ^
3. *Iron-Diamond tiers are split by division (4/3/2/1 being the highest), Master and up do not have divisions and are reliant on LP* ^
4. *LoL has a feature where you can add a 'friend note' that allows you to provide more info about a friend* ^

Wei: Soft is so CUTE omg T^T

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ICDI Chapter 6: Are you copying Road?

Lu Boyuan's hands rested on the keyboard, and he only typed something after a long pause.

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: Should've been.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Oh.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Then did he send the gifts by accident?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: I can refund the money]

Lu Boyuan remembered what Xiao Bai said that day about Soft, roasting him for being greedy for money and reading out the ID of anyone who sent him gifts, no matter how offensive the ID was.

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: No]

Jian Rong had typed out another question, but when he glanced at the chatbox, he felt like he was just dithering around, so he restrained himself and deleted what he wrote.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Can you hear voice chat]

In order to make it more convenient for players to communicate, LoL had an internal voice chat system. Lu Boyuan glanced over and saw that Soft's microphone icon was currently flashing.

He changed to earphones, and as soon as he finished putting them on, he heard the sound of typing come from the other end, quite noisily.

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: I can]

“Is the sound too loud? I just finished streaming, and I’m too lazy to adjust the sound card,” Soft spoke up.

Lu Boyuan discovered that his voice sounded different when he was insulting someone versus when he was just chatting casually. When he was insulting someone, his voice had a provocative, mocking energy to it, while it was much more pleasant to listen to when he was talking normally.

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: No]

Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow. “You don’t have a mic?”

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: Broken, do you mind]

To Jian Rong, there wasn’t much difference between solo or duo queue. He turned on his microphone just because it was too much work to type, so it didn’t really matter if the other side could talk or not.

“I don’t.” Jian Rong said, “Let’s pick roles.”

Before entering the match, every player had to preselect two roles that they wanted to play to avoid conflicts arising between players over roles[1].

Jian Rong hadn’t played much on his national server main account this season. Right now, his account was just barely at Diamond 3, so there was hardly any wait time when matchmaking, and they entered a game after only a few seconds.

Immediately upon entering the match was the ban phase[2]. Jian Rong didn't ban any champions, directly choosing the none ban. That kind of behavior was just like saying "*I fear no champions*."

He looked up, and saw that his teammate banned Zed.

You're out there playing top, why ban my mid champ?

Jian Rong frowned and was about to ask when he saw the word written under the "Invincible Q-*Ge*" ID: jungler.

Jian Rong asked, "You're not playing top lane?"

[Invincible Q-*Ge*: Got tired of it]

Jian Rong made an "oh" noise. A few seconds later, the banned champions from both teams were completely revealed.

Zed, Yasuo, LeBlanc, and Talon were all banned.

[Number One Feeder: #4 is Soft?]

Jian Rong shot a glance at the ID. Unfamiliar, didn't recognize it.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: ?]

[Number One Feeder: All the champs you're good at were banned. How about you switch roles with me, and you come play support?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: There are more champs I'm good at than the total number of champs you've ever played]

[Number One Feeder: …]

Jian Rong was the last one to pick[3], so while he was waiting, he switched screens and answered a message. By the time he returned, everyone else had already finished selecting their champions.

He glanced at the team composition before he chose Syndra.

[Number One Feeder: You're using Syndra against Fizz? The enemy is gonna restrain you completely]

[Number One Feeder: You've played so many low rank games, can you still play in Diamond 4? This is the last match point game for my promo series, don't screw me over bro.]

Maybe it was because he had been playing promotion series games to the point of seclusion, but this support was particularly talkative. Never mind Jian Rong, even the other people felt a little annoyed.

However, it wasn't like the support was completely wrong either. Just judging by champions alone, it really wasn't easy for Syndra to take on Fizz during the laning phase.

But who was Jian Rong? After playing mid for so many years, he knew more about trading[4] than anyone else. He farmed his lane all the way to level 6 without suffering any losses; he even killed over a dozen more minions than Fizz.

After another trade, Jian Rong subconsciously wanted to call over the jungler to come gank, and he opened his mouth only to pause.

Ah, he shouldn't trouble this newly promoted jungler of theirs.

At that moment, there was suddenly the sound of a ping—— [Invincible Q-*Ge* is on the way.]

During the game, a player could send out a few simple pings, and "On My Way" was one of them, indicating that one's teammate was about to arrive. Only then did Jian Rong realize that their team's jungler, Lee Sin, had already snuck into the river next to the enemy's tower.

The moment Fizz used his blink skill, Lee Sin instantly leaped out of the river and kicked Fizz back over to Jian Rong. Simultaneously, Jian Rong rapidly knocked back Syndra's Dark Spheres and stunned the enemy, coordinating with Lee Sin's damage to successfully kill Fizz.

Even though it was a common combination, all of their skills were used with perfect timing, not sloppy in the slightest. They didn't give the enemy mid laner any room to retreat.

After receiving 300 gold, Jian Rong returned to base to buy equipment. "Keep coming. As long as you come, I can kill."

"Yuan Qian" didn't answer him. But as the game continued, the team's chat was crammed full of the same line—

[Invincible Q-*Ge* is on the way.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay is on a killing spree. (Three Kills)]

[Invincible Q-*Ge* is on the way.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay is dominating the match. (Six Kills)]

[Invincible Q-*Ge* is on the way.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay is beyond legendary! (Eight Kills)]

After killing another enemy, Jian Rong arrogantly returned to base while standing beside the other team's base. He glanced at the chat in the lower left corner and suddenly laughed. "Are you copying Road?"

All the fans knew that when Road was streaming and playing ranked, he never used the chat to communicate with his teammates; he would only ever silently drive the three lanes. The sole interaction he used was the "On My Way" ping, so the reason some fans called him "God Lu" wasn't entirely because of the "Lu"[5] character in his name.

What's more, Road's signature champion was Lee Sin. He had used this champion to completely overturn the arena during the World Championships before, and every time he initiated a team fight and escaped, the audience would watch with their hearts in their throats.

[Invincible Q-*Ge* (Lee Sin): .]

[Invincible Q-*Ge* (Lee Sin): No.]

When they were pushing the enemy's Nexus, Jian Rong generously praised, "You play jungler very well."

Lu Boyuan was about to type.

"Better than your top lane." Jian Rong said, "How about you switch over?"

"…"

"Yuan Qian" was quiet for a while.

[Invincible Q-*Ge* (Lee Sin): I'll consider it]

After the match finished, Jian Rong got up to use the restroom. As he was washing his hands, he stared at the stream of water and recalled Lee Sin's playstyle—he wasn't shooting off his mouth just then. Even though it was just a Diamond game, it was clear from the gameplay details like tower pushing and team fighting that Yuan Qian's Lee Sin was quite something.

Almost every single one of his ganks made Jian Rong feel extremely comfortable, and he appeared wherever he was needed. He could even gank and invade the enemy's jungle without neglecting either one.

Jian Rong returned from the bathroom and put on his headphones again. "Back. Are you playing all night?"

"I can't play anymore." Yuan Qian's voice came through, and he sounded a little apologetic. "Xiao Bai wants to duo queue with me. Next time?"

His mic was fixed now?

Jian Rong was about to agree when he heard a distant, indistinct voice travel through the headphones from the other side.

"Hurry up and kick that bluenette troll! He's definitely going to screw with you later!"

When Jian Rong heard that, he paused his action of leaving the party. “Xiao Bai?”

The other side instantly grew silent, and the voice didn’t say anything else either. It was obvious that Yuan Qian was currently using the computer speakers and not headphones.

“The Bye in your team?” Jian Rong purposefully drew out his words and asked, “That support who did a reverse Q[6] while playing Thresh and got lost in the jungle on Yuumi during the regular season?”

Xiao Bai: “……”

Yuan Qian wanted to help speak up for his teammate, but everything Jian Rong said was true. He couldn’t refute anything, so he just coughed lightly and said ambiguously, “En…”

“Then you look after yourself.” Jian Rong sounded pitying. “See ya.”

Xiao Bai: “……!!!”

Right after Soft left the lobby, Xiao Bai exploded. “Is this troll obsessed with our team! How come he watches every single one of our competitions! He’s so annoying!!”

Pine asked without looking back, “Why didn’t you say that to him just now?”

Xiao Bai said confidently, “BS! It’s not like I can out-roast him!”

Lu Boyuan had already returned to his own computer. He plugged his earphones into the computer and opened StarTV's platform again.

After switching to his side account, he entered Soft's livestream room. Sure enough, the other side had already stopped streaming, and a livestream replay popped up on the interface.

Lu Boyuan adjusted his gaming chair to a comfortable angle before he randomly clicked to a part of the replay and started to watch it quietly.

—

The day of the S10 World Championships, Jian Rong took a leave of absence from livestreaming and arrived at Shanghai Stadium's entrance at five P.M. on the dot.

He wore a black baseball hat that had a crown logo printed on it, and he was currently looking down and playing with his phone while waiting for someone.

He refreshed his leave of absence Weibo that he just posted. There were a few hundred comments underneath it, all cursing him for his sudden break.

Normally, Jian Rong would battle it out with them a bit, but today he really had posted the notice at the last minute, so it was his fault.

He chose a few comments to reply to.

[*Laozi* waited for you for two hours, then you fucking come out with 'taking a break'? Grandpa threw up.]

[Soft: ^-^]

[You even skimp on Worlds? Why are you in such a rush to be reborn??]

[Soft: T.T]

[Dumbass, get back here and stream. *Laozi* will send you a Sea of Stars]

[Soft: Dad isn't coming back, just watch by yourself >_<]

The water friends were thunderstruck by his emoticons, and they replied even more vehemently. Even as he scrolled through the comments, Jian Rong couldn't help but want to laugh.

"I'm here, I'm here." A man wearing a black windbreaker ran over to him, panting. "There was traffic, I was stuck at the freaking parking lot for almost half an hour…"

It was Shiliu.

Shiliu just broke up with his girlfriend, so he had an extra Worlds ticket and had asked late last night whether Jian Rong wanted to come watch with him.

It was a ticket with a good seat in the VIP section, obtained through a special channel. Money couldn't even buy that kind of ticket. Jian Rong thought about it for two seconds before he briskly abandoned today's livestream.

Shiliu glanced around them. "Let's go. We enter through a different entrance, we don't need to wait in line with these tickets."

When they entered the arena, there were already quite a few people in the audience. Jian Rong's ticket was for one of the first rows, and anyone who could obtain a ticket with this kind of seat all had some connection. Jian Rong swept a cursory glance around and saw quite a few big streamers from StarTV; there were even some players from pro teams present as well.

Shiliu skillfully greeted and chatted with those people. Usually, Jian Rong didn't like to deal with this kind of social interaction, so he pulled the baseball hat down a little before continuing to reply with emoticons.

A few minutes later, a group of people silently entered the stadium.

They were covered up well, with every person wearing a hat and mask so there was no way to see their face clearly. But no matter how much they covered up, they were still recognized by the surrounding crowd, and everyone couldn't help but look in their direction while whispering.

After sitting down, Xiao Bai couldn't resist taking a look around the Worlds stadium.

So impressive.

When he remembered that originally there was a chance for this to be his own competition arena, he felt a bit gloomy, and he tugged his scarf up to his nose. "The arena is just so-so anyway… how long until the competition starts again?"

Yuan Qian glanced at his watch. "Should be soon."

Xiao Bai let out an “oh” and looked at the person to his right. “*Ge*, why are you still watching a replay? Which match?”

Lu Boyuan had one earphone in, and he didn’t even look up as he randomly made up something. “Quarterfinals.”

In the game replay, “No Way You’re So Trash” was playing Orianna, the champion that appeared the least in Soft’s stream replays.

During the current wave, Orianna fought 1v2 while defending the turret and beautifully killed the enemy mid laner and jungler. After killing them, she then trampled over their “corpses” and danced on them.

After dancing, Soft recalled to base and sneered, “If this jungler can gank me once, I’ll call him Dad.”

At the same time, the audience members sitting to his right were chatting.

A man asked, “Who do you think will win Worlds? I feel like PUD’s jungler has been pretty impressive lately. They’re all saying that he’s almost at Road’s level.”

The other person was quiet for a long time before he said, “Yeah.”

Perhaps because he had just been caught outside in the chill, the boy’s voice was a little low and hoarse, but its timbre remained unchanged. It perfectly matched the voice coming from Lu Boyuan’s earphones.

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow before he slowly tilted his head to the side.

The youth sitting next to him had the zipper of his jacket pulled all the way up to his neck. Since his head was lowered, Lu Boyuan could only see his tall and straight nose.

He was wearing a baseball hat, and a few tufts of blue hair peeked out from the gap at the back of the hat.

TTC's logo was on the hat. If one looked closely, they would also see that there was a signature printed underneath the logo: Road.

Before Lu Boyuan could recall which year's merch this hat belonged to, the youth spoke again and finished what he was saying earlier. "If he practices for another 800 years, then he can just about catch up."

Translation Notes

1. *Roles as in top, mid, bot, support, jungler* ^
2. *Before every game there's a ban phase where players can choose to ban a champ (or ban none) so nobody can play that champ during that game. Usually in organized games people will ban champs the other side is known to be good at; otherwise, champs that are generally considered OP/widely used will usually be banned instead* ^
3. *After the ban phase is the pick phase, in which players take turns choosing their champs based on their assigned pick order. No champion can be used more than once in a game. There's a good visual of the pick-ban phase at the bottom of this wiki page.* ^
4. *Trading: an important mechanic in LoL where champions exchange damage with each other without the intent of killing the other party.*

Trading allows a player to gain lane dominance and pressure the enemy. Since you're fighting and swapping damage, usually health goes down, leaving room to gank. ^

5. *Lu/路 means Road, but it's also the character used as the "way" in OMW.* ^
6. *Reverse Q comes from a Chinese meme about a LoL pro player who shot his Q skill (an arrow) in the wrong direction during Worlds. A Reddit thread about it for anyone interested!* ^

Yan: And they meet face to face!!! Also in case anyone is curious, the Summer Playoffs for LoL have been ongoing these past few days. Through watching the livestreams, I've concluded I still do not really know enough about this game. HAHA

Wei: Sorry this is late, 100% my fault T^T will do better next time!

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ICDI Chapter 7: I was the one playing in that match.

The boy looked a little thin, and the small section of his nape that was exposed when he lowered his head was very pale. He didn't look much different from the way he did in his livestreams, so clearly he didn't use any random face-thinning-eye-enlarging filters when streaming.

Not like Xiao Bai, who had pulled the beautification bar to max when he first started streaming. Amidst the fans' uproarious laughter, they even sent him onto the hot search.

Shiliu laughed when he heard that. "He's not that bad… You really do like Road ah."

"I'm only stating facts." Jian Rong frowned. "PUD's jungler's weaknesses are very obvious. He's okay when ganking and team fighting, but he's too weak when invading the jungle. He's very reliant on his teammates' support. If the teammates don't follow him, then his rhythm would be broken up."

Shiliu thought about it and realized that really did seem to be the case.

The reason he went to ask Jian Rong to come with him this time was because he liked to hear Jian Rong analyze this sort of thing. He asked, "Then what about Road?"

Jian Rong lifted his head and pondered over it quietly for a few beats.

Lu Boyuan saw that his eyelashes were very long.

Jian Rong said, “Road’s weak point… his teammates are too inferior?”

Shiliu: “?”

“I didn’t pay attention to the other roles, but the mid laner is too trash,” Jian Rong said. “He only knows how to kill minions and farm. He can’t provide assistance, nor can he create an advantage for himself. Useless piece of crap.”

Shiliu assessed, “This is called competitive rivalry.”

Jian Rong tugged the brim of his hat downwards and said, “I played with Kan before on the Korean server. I filled in as a support, he was mid, and the enemy mid was HT’s starting mid laner.”

Shiliu knew that his Korean server account was ranked highly before, so he wasn’t surprised that Jian Rong could match with professional players. “And then?”

“He was solo killed by the other team four times.” Jian Rong spoke breezily. “I wasn’t paying attention to the IDs at the time, so I thought he was some small retired player from another division.”

Shiliu: “…”

Lu Boyuan looked away, and there was a trace of a helpless smile in his lowered eyes. He exited the video on his phone and stuffed his earphones casually into a pocket.

The competition was about to begin, and the staff members went on stage to finish their last-minute preparations. The commentators were already seated at their spots as well. The atmosphere of the World Championships spread lightning fast, and the entire arena was abuzz with noise.

Ding-ge returned after going backstage to greet his friends. He straightened his suit before he sat down, asking the person whose head was lowered the entire time, “The competition is about to start, what are you still watching?”

Xiao Bai looked up. “Nothing, I was just checking out StarTV.”

Yuan Qian said, “Aren’t all the streamers waiting for the official broadcast right now? What is there to see?”

Xiao Bai clicked his tongue. “I wanted to listen and see how that bluenette troll is going to flame HT or PUD later, but he actually isn’t streaming.”

“He didn’t comment on competitions very often in the first place.” Yuan Qian waved at his streamer friends sitting further back as a greeting before he continued, “Maybe he came to the arena today too.”

“Does he dare?! I’m not exaggerating at all, he’s completely offended every single member of every single team that’s here today.” Xiao Bai straightened up and peered around. “I can recognize that little bluenette on the spot. If he dares to show up here, I have no choice but to settle my accounts properly with him…”

Just as he said that, he locked eyes with his ge.

Lu Boyuan said, “Sit properly, it’s about to start.”

Xiao Bai let out an “oh” and obediently sat back down.

With the three commentators at their seats, the Worlds broadcast officially began, and the lighting on the audience dimmed.

After the commentators each introduced themselves, they started to analyze both teams.

Usually, in LPL competition broadcasts, the commentators were extremely neutral, but when two different divisions collided, the commentators would always be more partial towards the players from their own division.

“Even though HT is strong, their breakthrough point is also very obvious. For example, the newcomer duo that just joined their team. They don’t have enough competition experience, so it’s easy to drop the ball when it comes to the mid-late game. By contrast, our PUD players’ team composition is already very well developed, so I have a lot of faith in them!”

After the commentator hyped up PUD for a while, the director aimed the camera at the stadium’s audience.

Commentator A: “This year’s World Championships finals are being held in Shanghai, and we could be considered as having the home ground advantage as well! I can see that there’s a huge crowd right now at the competition arena, and the fans are all extremely passionate!”

The camera cut to the front rows of the arena.

Commentator B: “That’s right. But it’s not just the fans who are passionate. There are quite a few familiar faces who’ve come to the stadium today… all the members from the teams Fighting Tiger and MFG are present, as well as from the team Squid…”

Every time the commentators listed out another team, the fans sitting in the back would cheer and shout.

Jian Rong felt like his eardrums were about to burst from the screaming.

He frowned and removed his hat before he lowered his head and casually messed with his hair a bit, lifting a hand to massage his ear.

At that moment, the camera turned to another team.

Immediately, the audience’s cheers multiplied infinitely. In such a situation, it wouldn’t be too much to say a superstar had appeared at the scene.

Commentator C: “And—our Tank team is also here at the stadium!!!”

Jian Rong was stunned for a few seconds before he realized what team the commentator was talking about.

TTC’s official name was “Take the Crown.”

But since this team won the World Championships right after entering LPL, they were an incredible powerhouse, and the fans all jokingly referred to the team as “Tank Training Center.”

And then, TTC became the so-called “Tank team.”

Jian Rong looked up at the large TV screen above the stage, wanting to see who from TTC was present.

First the camera focused on TTC's bottom lane duo. Pine was still wearing his mask, and his expression didn't change at all when he looked at the camera; Xiao Bai took off all his face coverings and flashed a grin at the camera, revealing a mouthful of white teeth.

After that was Yuan Qian and Ding-ge. Both of them waved appropriately while wearing faint smiles.

The last shot was a single-person focus. The moment the man appeared on the big screen, the screams nearly overturned the roof. If someone didn't know better, they would've thought that PUD already won the championship.

LPL's most popular player, Road, was covered up extremely well. He was wearing both his hat and mask, but he still couldn't escape the director's hawk eyes.

A few seconds later, upon seeing that the camera hadn't moved, Lu Boyuan helplessly raised the brim of his hat a little, revealing his eyes.

Then he nodded at the camera.

The commentators' microphones were already extremely loud, but at that current moment, they were still drowned out by the audience's roars. "Our God Lu is here as well! Today's competition arena is absolutely a gathering of legends! Audience members, the price of your ticket is worth it!"

If this were any other occasion, Jian Rong would have already left and gone to buy earplugs.

But he momentarily couldn't afford to care about anything else.

He stared blankly at the Road on the big screen… and the audience member to Road's right who had accidentally entered the shot.

Blue hair, black jacket, holding a baseball hat in his hand, a lost expression on his face.

It was himself.

The director's camera abruptly shifted, and Jian Rong's entire face entered the camera without warning.

Jian Rong: "?"

Commentator A: "In addition, the person sitting next to God Lu is actually his fan! Everyone, take a look at this audience member's hat…"

Half of his soul returned to him, and Jian Rong stiffly hid his hat inside his jacket.

Commentator A: "Hahaha, don't worry, we have security over here, no one would dare steal your hat from you."

Jian Rong: "…"

The other two commentators were both startled, and they only resumed the conversation after a few seconds.

“Er, yes.” Commentator B said, “…actually, I know this fan.”

Commentator A: “What do you mean?”

Commentator C: “He’s also a streamer for LoL. His stream content… is very unique.”

Commentator A was puzzled. “How so?”

“He’s very good at, uh that,” Commentator C floundered for a long time before he finally squeezed out, “…analyzing players.”

Commentator A: “???”

The audience was roaring with laughter. In the official broadcast that they couldn’t see, “666” and “hahaha” had already flooded the entire barrage.

The camera soon refocused back on the commentators, and the three commentators skillfully and easily proceeded onto the next topic.

The people below the stage weren’t nearly as calm.

Jian Rong maintained his hat-hiding movement from just then, his back rigid as he remained frozen.

He wasn’t in the habit of glancing around nosily, so after he sat down he had only concentrated on looking at Weibo and hadn’t noticed who was sitting next to him at all.

But now he knew.

More than ten seconds later, Jian Rong slowly fished out his hat from inside his jacket and put it back on his head, messing up his hair completely.

TTC's side had also descended into a brief silence.

Pine nudged Xiao Bai with his shoulder and said coldly, "What're you in a daze for? Go settle your accounts."

Xiao Bai: "..."

Xiao Bai snuck a glance in that direction. At that moment, the bluenette troll's face was chilly, and his lips were pressed tightly together. Even though he didn't have a sturdy figure, he still didn't look like someone to be trifled with.

Xiao Bai withdrew his head. "I-I'll endure it for now. With so many people watching, it's not good for me to do anything."

Pine: "Coward."

In the end, both sides' diplomats broke the deadlock.

Yuan Qian bent forward and waved at Shiliu over the two people between them. "Shiliu? You're here too?"

Shiliu quickly smiled and nodded. "Yeah, what a coincidence, Qian-ge. You guys came to watch the competition too?"

"In any case, it's close to the base, so we just came over." Yuan Qian glanced at the person next to Shiliu. "You must be Soft, right? We've played together in-game before."

Jian Rong tilted his head and answered with an “en.”

With his hat on, the brim of it acted as a screen so that he couldn’t see the person to his left.

Yuan Qian said, “It’s been a long time since we’ve played together. If the opportunity arises, let’s queue together again sometime.”

Jian Rong was in the middle of remembering everything he and Shiliu were chatting about before. When he heard that, he blurted out, “Didn’t we play together just a few days ago?”

Yuan Qian was startled, before he immediately explained, “Ah, that day…”

“I was the one playing in that match.” The person in between them suddenly spoke.

The man’s voice was very soft. Jian Rong felt like he was nailed in place as he maintained the slightly bent forward posture he had used to converse with Yuan Qian.

He felt a gaze sweep down from above, landing straight on his hat.

Jian Rong started to recall everything he had done that day.

Seemed to have played Syndra.

Asked “Yuan Qian” if he was copying Road.

Also persistently asked “Yuan Qian” if the person sending gifts that day was Road himself or not.

"..."

Lu Boyuan looked at his hat and said, "My feel for the game wasn't good that day. I didn't screw you over, did I."

Jian Rong could no longer hear what the commentators were saying clearly anymore. He briefly closed his eyes before he braced himself and slowly raised his head, meeting Lu Boyuan's gaze.

The arena's lights spilled in the depths of Lu Boyuan's eyes, like a lake.

Jian Rong struggled free from the lake, his heart beating even faster than the rhythm of the background music.

"Oh." With a wooden expression, he licked his lips and shook his head. "You didn't."

Yan: Hehehe, Jian Rong is exposed as a Road fan! A true Road fan with very old merch! :)) Also omg first chapter without any translation notes OTL... only because they didn't play league at all ^^' I will try my best to keep T/Ns to a minimum in the future! I think most of the core terms have been explained already, thankfully.

Wei: LOL Jian Rong is a true Road groupie ahaha completely exposed

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ICDI Chapter 8: Does it hurt?

After the commentators finished discussing the champions and team compositions commonly used by both teams' players, for some reason, the topic circled back around again.

"The competition this time is definitely going to be sensational, but I'm actually still a little regretful deep inside," Commentator A said. "I'm sure everyone would rather see two of LPL's teams contend for the trophy on their home ground."

Commentator B nodded. "Yes, it's really too bad about Tank. But they've worked extremely hard, and even played all the way to BO5. I'm sure that next year they'll definitely be able to adjust their condition and start out anew."

When the commentators said that, Lu Boyuan was still looking at Jian Rong, eyes lowered, as if what they were saying had nothing to do with him.

Upon hearing Jian Rong's reply, Lu Boyuan let out an "en" and sat upright once more while also removing his mask and hat. Since he was already caught by the cameras, there was no point in trying to hide anymore.

Jian Rong stared at his chin for a few seconds. Only when Lu Boyuan turned his head to the side to talk to Yuan Qian did he abruptly pull himself together and sit back in his chair lightning fast.

Even though it was quite noisy around them, if he listened carefully, he could still hear what the people next to him were chatting about.

Yuan Qian and the others were talking about going to eat skewers after the competition, and they were currently discussing where to eat.

Lu Boyuan only listened, interjecting occasionally with an “anything works” or “en.”

His voice wasn’t loud, and it sounded more or less the same way it did during competition interviews. It was a little deeper than when Jian Rong had first heard it a few years ago.

Shiliu called his name, and when he didn’t receive a reply, he nudged Jian Rong with his elbow. “Jian Rong?”

Jian Rong suddenly snapped out of it. “Ah?”

“It’s starting.”

The stage lights were on in full effect, and some time ago the two teams had already gone on stage. The host was currently introducing each player to the audience.

PUD was LPL’s other powerful and rich team, and they had been extremely popular before TTC suddenly emerged out of nowhere. Last year alone, they had pulled two powerful Korean players into the team, and their team’s popularity was second only to TTC’s.

All ten players took their seats, and the atmosphere of the stadium instantly grew tense. After the pick-ban phase began, the arena was even more engulfed by shouts of “PUD.”

After the team composition was locked, Shiliu asked, “Who do you think will win?”

Jian Rong said, “Dunno.”

“Analyze a little ah. PUD’s jungler chose Jarvan, and his win rate with Jarvan has been very high. This season he only lost one match while playing Jarvan.” Shiliu paused momentarily. “Of course, I know he isn’t as strong as Road…”

“PUD’s team composition is better than HT’s.” Jian Rong interrupted him. “…if they don’t screw up in the early game, PUD will have a higher chance of winning in the mid-late game. Also, lower your voice a little, don’t disturb the people around us as they watch.”

The commentators’ voices were already so loud, who could Shiliu possibly disturb?

Shiliu gave a baffled “oh” and lowered his voice.

Yuan Qian was fully focused on watching the game when Xiao Bai suddenly tugged at his sleeve from next to him.

“Qian-*ge*,” Xiao Bai said, “How about you switch places with Captain?”

Yuan Qian said, perplexed, “Why?”

“Do you have the heart to make him sit with that bluenette troll!”

Hearing that, Yuan Qian couldn’t help but shoot a quick look to his right. “It’s not that bad, is it? I feel like he seems pretty well-behaved. He’s just a

little brother, it should be fine."

Xiao Bai's eyes grew round.

He dyed his hair, he wore a scowl on his face, and he insulted people, but he was a well-behaved little brother?

At last, Yuan Qian still went to talk to Lu Boyuan about it.

"*Ge*, do you want to switch seats?"

Jian Rong was watching the big screen absent-mindedly and unexpectedly heard that question.

He stared straight ahead and secretly pricked up his ears.

Lu Boyuan asked, "What's the matter."

"Nothing," Yuan Qian said. "I can just see a bit clearer from my spot."

Lu Boyuan didn't move. "I can also see clearly from here."

Yuan Qian paused for a few seconds. "Xiao Bai wants you to sit and watch with him. He said that he wants to listen to you explain the match."

Jian Rong leaned back in his chair, his expression growing more sour.

"When we get back, Ding-*ge* will set up a game review." Lu Boyuan said, "Let's just watch the competition."

PUD and HT were both in very good condition today. After mutually exchanging wins and losses, each side won two games, and the score was

once again a nerve-wracking 2:2.

Nobody expected the competition to reach the match point game two weeks in a row. The atmosphere of the arena climbed to its peak, and when PUD went offstage to take a brief rest, the audience was still shouting their name.

“Another match point game, this is way too exciting.” Shiliu stood up. “This won’t do. I gotta empty my bladder so I can focus on watching the match in a bit. You coming?”

Jian Rong nodded and stood up with him, subconsciously moving towards the right.

But Shiliu stopped him. “Go to the left, the restroom’s that way.”

Jian Rong: “…”

He turned around and saw Lu Boyuan, whose head was lowered as he played on his phone.

A few seconds later, Lu Boyuan looked up. “Going out?”

Jian Rong: “…en.”

The seats in their row weren’t set up well, so there wasn’t a lot of space between the rows. Lu Boyuan had long legs, and even if he drew them up, he could only barely make enough room for a narrow passageway.

Jian Rong ducked his head, wanting to walk past quickly. He had just taken a single step when the audience member sitting in front of Lu Boyuan

suddenly stood up and pushed his chair back, forcing Jian Rong to stop walking completely.

Jian Rong stared at his leg that was wedged between Lu Boyuan's and thought he might as well saw it off on the spot and be done with it.

Clearly, the person in front of them hadn't noticed what was going on behind him and had already departed with his friends. Jian Rong sucked in a deep breath and was about to backtrack when Lu Boyuan abruptly sat up straight and leaned towards him—and then stopped when he was just one handspan away from the waistband of Jian Rong's pants.

Lu Boyuan pushed aside the chair in front of him and said, "Go ahead."

Jian Rong tossed down a "thank you" before he sped up and passed Lu Boyuan, making his exit without glancing back once.

Right after Jian Rong left, Xiao Bai instantly said exaggeratedly, "This troll actually knows how to say thank you!"

Pine: "Do you dare to say any of this to his face or not?"

"Who wants to talk to him." Xiao Bai said, "But he really does seem to be a fan of my *ge*. Did you guys see his hat? It even has my *ge*'s signature on it."

Everyone else looked towards Lu Boyuan, who said indifferently, "I didn't sign it, it's printed."

Yuan Qian added, "It's probably merch from some year's competition."

“So many teams came today. I counted just then, besides us there are at least four other teams here.” After Xiao Bai said that, he seemed to think of something, and he said gleefully, “Right now everyone in the stadium knows that Soft is here. He’s offended so many people, I wonder if those players’ fans are gonna find him and get revenge?”

Ding-*ge* swatted him on the head. “Enough, stop with all the nonsense. I’m going to buy water, you come with me.”

Xiao Bai and Pine were hauled away to be water carriers. Yuan Qian’s back felt sore from sitting, and he was about to get up and stroll around a little when Lu Boyuan called out to him.

—

Jian Rong splashed his face twice with cold water before returning to the audience.

The night wind blowing on his face made him feel exceptionally awake. By the time he returned, the fifth match was just beginning.

Fifty-one minutes in, PUD was counterganked by HT, and unfortunately lost the match. The moment the competition ended, the girl sitting in front of them covered her face and sobbed, and even the commentators’ voices were a bit choked up.

“Ai, what a pity. They could’ve won, but they didn’t do well in the last team fight.” As they prepared to leave the stadium, Shiliu continued to sigh. “PUD’s mid-jungler duo were so compatible during the fourth game, why didn’t they use that team composition again?”

Jian Rong hadn't been paying very close attention, so he had already forgotten who played what in PUD's fourth game.

"Shiliu!" A call came from behind them.

They both looked back and saw TTC standing behind them.

Yuan Qian said, "Right now all the exits are crowded. We're allowed to leave through the back door, do you two want to come with us?"

Xiao Bai looked disbelievingly at Yuan Qian. "???"

Shiliu was also startled. "Sure. My car just happens to be parked at the back parking lot too. Jian Rong, I can send you back."

Naturally the more convenient things were, the better, so Jian Rong hesitantly agreed and turned around to follow TTC's members.

The back door wasn't far and a staff member who knew the way guided them, so they reached it quickly. After Ding-*ge* thanked the staff, the group walked down the stairs.

It started drizzling right after the competition finished, and there was an icy dampness in the air, making everyone pull their jackets tighter around themselves.

Yuan Qian peered around. "Where's Xiao Bai?"

Ding-*ge* said, "Met an acquaintance, he's over there chatting. He'll catch up soon."

The back exit was connected to a very long flight of stairs, and they came to a halt after descending down the stairs.

Shiliu said, “Thanks, we’ll be heading out first then. I have an umbrella in my car, should I get it for you guys?”

“No need, our bus is about to get here.”

After Yuan Qian said that, he saw Xiao Bai exit the back door and swiftly walk down the stairs. He couldn’t help but warn, “Xiao Bai, slow down a little. It just rained, so the steps are really…”

Before he could finish, Xiao Bai slipped precisely on the second step from the bottom and fell straight towards the person standing in front of him, his face paling. “Holy shi—”

Jian Rong felt like a meteorite had smashed right onto him.

Something crashed into him without any warning whatsoever, making him stumble and lose his balance, falling forward.

When the person in front of him heard the noise, he looked over, and Jian Rong’s heart leaped. He didn’t have any time to change his trajectory, and he collided straight into that person.

Lu Boyuan hadn’t zipped up his jacket, and the sweater he was wearing underneath had a soft texture to it. Jian Rong could smell the scent clinging onto the sweater; the fragrance was very faint, and it was unclear whether it was the smell of soap or shower gel.

In order to maintain his balance, Lu Boyuan lifted a hand and hooked it around the back of Jian Rong's neck briefly, allowing the two of them to finally regain their footing.

Before Jian Rong could recover, Lu Boyuan had already removed his hand. He asked, "Does it hurt?"

Jian Rong could feel Lu Boyuan's chest vibrate as he spoke, and as if he were electrocuted, Jian Rong instantly lifted his face away from Lu Boyuan's clothing and moved back a few steps. First he shook his head before he said stiffly, "It doesn't."

Nobody was there to catch Xiao Bai, and he fell flat on his face. At least Jian Rong was there to cushion him halfway, or else he probably would've seen blood.

He stood up and immediately looked at Jian Rong. "Sorry, sorry! The steps were too slippery, so I lost my balance. Did I hurt you?? I'll take you to the hospital to get it checked out…"

Seeing that Xiao Bai looked like he was about to come over and inspect his condition, Jian Rong promptly stepped back.

"No need," Jian Rong said. "Stay away from me."

Xiao Bai: "…"

After Jian Rong left with Shiliu, Xiao Bai patted his chest, still spooked.

Upon recovering, he said with a bitter expression, “I crashed into him so hard just then, Soft is definitely going to hold a grudge. He’s going to do his best to slander me for sure in the future.”

Yuan Qian comforted him. “He won’t.”

“He absolutely will! Did you guys see what he looked like just now?” Xiao Bai wailed, “He was so pissed off by me that his face turned red, just like a tomato… even with all those haters cursing him day in day out in his stream, he’s never gotten so pissed off that his face has turned red before!!”

—

The author has something to say:

That’s right, you’re finished.

Yan: Hahaha poor Xiao Bai. Too petty to let Jian Rong off the hook, but too cowardly to do anything about it. I’m sure Jian Rong’s face wasn’t red because of you though, Xiao Bai, so at least you don’t have to worry about that huhuhu

Wei: Jian Rong is so nervous around Lu Boyuan it’s sooo cute. Don’t worry Xiao Bai, I’m sure Jian Rong is secretly happy he got to interact with his idol hehe

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ICDI Chapter 9: I'm begging Road, please look at this dumbass son of mine!

Right after the competition ended, the intersections near the stadium were extremely backed up.

The car inched forward a tiny bit before stalling again. Shiliu decided to just put the car in park and turned to look at the passenger seat.

Jian Rong's elbow was propped on the windowsill, the palm of his hand placed seemingly casually against the back of his neck. He was currently staring outside.

Shiliu narrowed his eyes and leaned closer to him. Sensing the other person's gaze, Jian Rong's head whipped around. "What?"

"Why is your face still so red?" Shiliu looked him up and down. "Where did Xiao Bai bump into you? Should I take you to the hospital?"

Jian Rong covered his nape, which was burning faintly, and said, "It's fine, I'm not hurt. It's just because of the cold from sitting there too long."

Shiliu let out an "oh" and sat back in his seat. "Qian-*ge* is such a good person, he's even willing to take us out the back door. Actually, it's been a long time since I've contacted him…"

Jian Rong listened to him distractedly as he took out his phone and glanced at it. The screen was already filled with Weibo notifications.

Before the cars started moving again, Shiliu glanced at the hat that Jian Rong was holding and laughed. “Could it be that you’re not actually a fan of the whole team, you just like Road?”

Jian Rong said, “En.”

“When did you become a fan?” Shiliu made small talk.

Jian Rong said, “During a competition.”

“Which competition?” Shiliu asked, “How long have you been a fan? Where did that hat come from? In TTC, I still like Pine quite a bit, his Aphelios and Ezreal really are strong… you play mid, so how come you’re a fan of Road?”

He didn’t get an answer. Shiliu turned his head, puzzled, and discovered Jian Rong was also looking at him.

Jian Rong’s face was still red, but by now he had already regained an expression that looked just as contemptuous as it did during his streams.

He said, “Focus on yourself, mind your own business.”

Shiliu: “…”

When they arrived at the neighborhood gate, Jian Rong rejected the umbrella that Shiliu wanted to give him and got out of the car. “Thanks, I’ll treat you to a meal next time.”

Shiliu didn’t hold back. “I’ll choose the location.”

“Okay.”

“Hey, wait a second.” Shiliu stopped him and glanced at the nearby shabby neighborhood. “Why are you still living here? One of my friends happens to be renting out a place. The price is negotiable, but you can definitely afford it. The location and environment are both much better than here, how about I introduce you?”

Jian Rong shook his head without even considering it. “No need, I’m used to living here.”

The environment around the place he lived was indeed average, and the location was out of the way as well, but that didn’t matter much to Jian Rong, who only left the house once in a blue moon. As long as he had a clean bed and a computer that was connected to WiFi, he could live anywhere.

It was still raining, but it was just a very light drizzle. As Jian Rong watched Shiliu’s car drive away down the narrow road, he stuffed his hat into his jacket and pulled the zipper up high before turning and going home.

By the time TTC returned to the base, Xiao Bai was still hung up on what happened at the back entrance.

“Relax, it’s really not a big deal.” Yuan Qian said, “If you’re truly that afraid of Soft, I can ask Shiliu to put in a word for you.”

“Who’s afraid of him…” Xiao Bai puffed out his chest and bluffed, “Don’t I just feel bad for crashing into him? And also, Qian-*ge*, if it weren’t for you inviting them to walk out the back with us, I wouldn’t have crashed into him

ah. This is your fault too, you have to take responsibility and resolve the issue!!"

Yuan Qian didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Even though he had been the one to call out to them, he was just doing what their captain had asked him to do.

He nodded. "Okay, I'll talk to him."

Lu Boyuan ignored their bickering and walked towards the practice room while taking off his jacket.

He had just stepped into the room when Ding-*ge* followed after him.

"My friend recommended a massage therapist to me. I asked him to come over to the base tomorrow afternoon to help massage you guys a little." Ding-*ge* subconsciously glanced at Lu Boyuan's hand. "How's it been these past few days? Does it still hurt?"

"It's long stopped hurting." Lu Boyuan tossed the jacket over the back of the chair. When Ding-*ge* still didn't leave, his expression hesitant, Lu Boyuan asked, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." Ding-*ge* sighed. "It's just that StarTV came to find me."

StarTV was their livestream partner, and every member of TTC had signed a livestream contract with the platform.

The contracts were also personalized to the team members. Every other member had to stream about twenty to thirty hours a month, the times

varying per person. Only Lu Boyuan was different; he had no time requirement, and he still received a base salary even if he didn't stream. His gift allocation percentage was also high, and he could earn quite a hefty sum of money by streaming just one time.

However, Lu Boyuan didn't need that small amount of gift money. The amount of times he had streamed this year could be counted on one hand.

"Isn't it already the end of the year now? These platforms all have to put on some annual grand ceremony or something. Recently, there's been a fair amount of competition between these livestream platforms, and StarTV's competitor just signed on PUD. Rumor has it that they've become very popular, so the platform is worried that their LoL category's site traffic won't be enough… so they came and found me to ask you to help bring in some popularity." Ding-*ge* said, "But I didn't answer them yet, the decision is still up to you. If you want to stream, then do it; if not, I'll reject them."

As Ding-*ge* rambled on, he ended up backing out first. "Forget it, it's better not to stream. I'll go give the person in charge a call…"

"Wait a moment." Lu Boyuan stopped him. "When does the event start?"

Ding-*ge* was startled. "It starts tomorrow, all the way until December."

Lu Boyuan gave an "en" and compressed all the videos saved on his computer desktop before attaching them to an email and hitting send.

Ding-*ge*'s phone buzzed, and he received about a dozen compressed files in his email inbox. "What did you send?"

“Video recordings.” Lu Boyuan paused for a few seconds before adding, “In the video is the mid laner that I’m personally recommending to the team.”

—

The next day, the first thing Jian Rong heard when he woke up was the sound of raindrops pattering against the glass of the window.

This kind of noise was too hypnotic, and Jian Rong laid there for quite a while before he slowly opened his eyes. He stretched and felt around for his phone, which he’d tossed somewhere on the bed.

After getting into the habit of staying up all night, Jian Rong had watched movies the entire night, only sleeping when the sun rose. Right now, it was already 6:30 p.m.

The Weibo notifications were too disruptive, and before falling asleep he had already turned them off completely, so his phone screen was currently totally clean. The only message was from Shiliu: [Are you streaming today?]

[R-ong: Yes.]

[Shiliu: Not chasing after your idol?]

Jian Rong yawned and replied lazily.

[R-ong: Messaged the wrong person?]

[Shiliu: No, aren’t you a Road fan?]

[R-ong: …do you have to repeat that to me once a day? Worried that I'll forget?]

[Shiliu: Fuck, Road is streaming today]

Jian Rong stared at his phone in a daze for a few seconds.

[R-ong: Really? What time?]

Shiliu cursed a *"fucking fake fan"* before sending a screenshot from Weibo over.

[TTC · Road: Seven p.m. [& livestream room link]]

Jian Rong washed up in ten minutes before first opening up his own livestream main account and letting it run in the background. He then logged into his side account.

At 6:55, he promptly slipped into Road's livestream room.

Road wasn't there yet, but his livestream room was already full of people camping out. On the gift-giver list, there were fans, streamers, and even professional players. The gift money was already extremely high, rocketing the livestream room that hadn't even started streaming yet straight to the number one spot on the LoL category's monthly ranking.

The interface was lagging too much, so the platform opened four channels for Road.

Jian Rong had just found a channel that wasn't laggy when the livestream room's black screen suddenly flashed, and Road's computer desktop

appeared in front of everyone.

The streamer's mouse moved slightly on the desktop, and after a pause, a very light laugh traveled through the headphones.

"Just a moment. It's been too long since I last streamed, I forgot how to turn on the webcam."

[Ahhhh husband you're here QAQ!!!]

[Blowing off the dust that gathered in God Lu's livestream room =3=]

[Why bring in the sub during the match point game why bring in the sub during the match point game???]

[Announcing your retirement tonight?]

[TF retirement, if there isn't an official announcement don't go making up BS]

[TTC might as well just disband right now]

[Husband's laugh is so sexy I'm dead]

Thousands upon thousands of comments swept by. Jian Rong silently turned up the volume for his headphones and turned off the barrage.

The instant the barrage disappeared, a large video window jumped out.

The man sat in front of the computer, wearing yesterday's sweater, the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He was looking down, mostly

expressionless, waiting for the person next to him to finish adjusting his equipment.

Even though the barrage was off, the special effects from the gifts were still very laggy, and every gift banner streaked across the top of the livestream, pausing for less than two seconds before being replaced.

Jian Rong's old computer stuttered under the lag. He clicked his tongue and tossed out two Sea of Stars before he decided to lie down on his bed and watch using his tablet.

"Just casually streaming, don't waste your money." Lu Boyuan finished adjusting his mic volume, and without another word, he directly opened the LoL client.

By the time Jian Rong made it to his bed, Lu Boyuan had already queued into a game.

Lu Boyuan didn't talk much, occasionally answering a comment that he was able to read. He nonchalantly banned a champion before he asked, "What champion do you all want to see?"

The barrage immediately exploded.

The names of the champions overlapped densely with each other, and it was impossible to see anything clearly.

Jian Rong also added in a comment: [Lee Sin[1].]

“Okay.” Lu Boyuan glanced at the barrage before giving a light, brief smile. “Lee Sin it is.”

Jian Rong: “…”

He hugged the tablet and swallowed.

The vast majority of the comments were all “Lee Sin,” so there was no way the comment Lu Boyuan saw was the one that he sent. But for a split second, Jian Rong still had a sort of misperception that Road was talking to him.

With a completely calm expression, Jian Rong smashed out another two Sea of Stars.

Lu Boyuan didn’t answer any of the barrage’s questions, nor did he mention anything about the competition. He skillfully controlled the game, and in thirty-one minutes, he won the match with a score of 12/0/6.

Just when Jian Rong was about to smash some more gifts, someone called him through WeChat[2].

“It’s already eight, are you still going to stream or not?” Shiliu said, “All of your water friends have rushed over to my stream!”

Jian Rong was startled, and he hastily got up, carrying the tablet. In five minutes, he finished adjusting his streaming equipment. After muting the tablet, he started his livestream.

[Dumbass streamer, *laozi* thought that those other teams' fans got you last night and left your body to cool at the finals stadium]

[Ten minutes late, you gotta make up for it with an extra half hour tonight or else I'll report your livestream every day.]

[Late, explain]

"Slept too well, forgot about you all." Jian Rong spoke concisely.

[???]

[Is that something a fucking human would say??]

[I was trembling in fear watching the official stream last night, afraid that you'd charge onto the commentator platform and steal the mic to curse out PUD.]

Jian Rong said, "No, I didn't pay very close attention last night."

[You were there at the arena and didn't pay attention to the competition? Then why did you go??]

[Crap wait a sec, look at the first program on the streamer's taskbar!!!]

Jian Rong stared blankly before turning to look at his own taskbar—[StarTV_R-ong's Personal Homepage]

……it was the homepage of the side account that he had just opened in order to load money onto it.

Before Jian Rong could react, someone had already sent out a comment saying that they had successfully found the side account's personal homepage.

Darkness flashed across Jian Rong's vision. "Wait a moment, I can explain…"

On the other side, Lu Boyuan was waiting for Xiao Bai to log in so they could duo queue.

He was about to get up to make some coffee when he saw some strange comments appear in the barrage.

[Soft's army is here!!!]

[StarTV's famous troll streamer Soft actually secretly has a side account that only follows Road! He grandly tossed out six-figure[3] gifts for Road! And he forwarded every notification from Road's livestreams!]

[He even camped out in Road's livestream room before his own stream and forgot that he himself is also a fucking streamer :)]

[This dumbass normally doesn't even forward his own going live notifications, this straight guy is touched.]

[He's never changed out that trash computer of his ever since he started streaming. With the amount of gift money he smashed on you he could even open a crappy illegal internet cafe]

[I'm crying. Trolls also have feelings! Trolls also have loves! I'm begging Road, please look at this dumbass son of mine!!]

—

The author has something to say:

I'm also touched.

Translation Notes

1. *In case anyone is interested, Lee Sin, the Blind Monk, is a notoriously difficult champion to play well (according to Reddit). But those who can play it well dominate, and Lee Sin is the champ that LBY is known for.* ^
2. *WeChat: a Chinese messaging and social media platform, kind of like Facebook but just… more* ^
3. *At the very least, 100,000 RMB would be equal to around $14,000* ^

Yan: Jian Rong only spends money on one (1) man, and it's not himself. So please, Road, notice my dumbass son!!!

Wei: Adjfhaldjh Jian Rong exposed I'm crying ahahahhaa

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ICDI Chapter 10: Come onto me.

Those comments were rapidly engulfed by the barrage. No matter how many people came to snitch, they were still no match for the enthusiasm of Road's fans.

When the fans saw that there were people talking about some other streamer in the barrage, they were about to angrily condemn them for coming to freeload off the popularity when—

"What side account?" Lu Boyuan sat back down, gripping the empty cup.

[The side account that was cyberstalking you.]

[You all, let my son save some face, there's so many people in this livestream room! His side account homepage is http…]

Lu Boyuan was about to click on the webpage, but the other person ended up being kicked and banned by a room moderator for sending a link.

The room mods moved too fast. Lu Boyuan scanned through the barrage again but couldn't find the link, so he turned and asked the staff member sitting next to him, "If I jump over into another streamer's livestream, will my video stop working?"

When Lu Boyuan entered Soft's livestream, the other side was in the middle of investigating how to turn off the side account's visitor access.

The youth was wearing a short-sleeved white T-shirt. An elbow was propped up on the table, and he was gripping his hair, a despairing look on his face because he couldn't find the option to private the account. "What's wrong with this

platform… I charged so much money onto that side account. Isn't the customer God? How can you just show God's data to anyone who wants to see it??"

[If there ever came a day when you'd treat me as your god, our father-son relationship wouldn't be this awful.]

[Didn't you say you were going to explain? Go ahead and explain.]

[No wonder you're out there slandering other people every day. It turns out you're a Road fan, in that case I can understand. All of his fans are crazy dogs.]

"Fine, I'll explain." Jian Rong maximized the webpage and covered up the livestream interface to the point that he didn't even realize that the barrage had exploded.

"I'm just an ordinary fan of his, and I'll watch his streams occasionally. If I like them, then I'll send a gift…" At that point, Jian Rong frowned, confused.

That's right, he was just an ordinary fan, what was there to explain?

"It's the same as all of you coming to watch my stream. I'm just watching somebody else's livestream, what's the problem?" After talking himself out of it, Jian Rong's expression also relaxed quite a bit. "Not even a girlfriend would care as much as you all do. That bored?"

Jian Rong finally found the privacy settings, and as he restricted the access, he said, "Also, even though I'm Road's fan, nothing I say or do has anything to do with Road. Every day, you all run over to other streams to insult people while claiming to be my fans. Are you trying to make your dad bear all their grudges? Let's not cause trouble for each other, everyone should live their own lives well, understand?"

After finishing with the settings, Jian Rong prepared himself to duke it out with his fans and closed the webpage.

There were even more comments in the barrage than he had anticipated.

But the content was somewhat different from what he was expecting.

[Dumbass, Dad helped you call over Road!!]

[Do you not know how stingy you are? It's no problem if other people send gifts, but if you send gifts, then it's like the sun rising from the west, pigs flying, red rain falling from the sky!]

[Road's army has arrived—]

[Congrats darling Soft for successfully chasing after his idol!~]

[Who's your fan? I'm your mom, you don't have any fans, admit it to yourself already.]

Not too long ago, Soft's female fans also used to be very lively and cute.

But because they watched Soft's streams for too long and traded insults back and forth in the barrage with a bunch of uncouth men every day, by now they were all top-ranked sisters in Zaun[1].

Usually, when Jian Rong saw female fans swearing at other people, he would say something and tell them not to use so much profanity so they wouldn't be corrupted, but he couldn't care less about that right now.

A certain ID on his livestream room's money-smashing list was currently lit up.

Jian Rong's mouth was slightly agape, and the words he was about to use to squabble with the water friends got trapped in his throat. The calm that he finally

managed to regain was currently rapidly draining away.

He had just clawed his hair into a chicken's nest, and at the moment, his entire being seemed to be a little dazed.

The barrage was in an uproar. There were people insulting him, people telling him that he had successfully freeloaded off Road's popularity, and even people telling him to quickly welcome the boss.

Jian Rong combed a hand through his hair again and hesitantly opened his mouth after a long pause. "Welcome Road…"

[TTC · Road: Duo Q?]

With that, the content of the barrage unified at last as question marks completely filled the screen.

Jian Rong was startled, but his mouth moved faster than his brain. "Yes."

"Which server? I'll log in immediately." After saying that, Jian Rong felt like his tone was a little too excited, and he restrained himself a bit. When Road still didn't reply, he spoke again. "…I have an account on every server. China, Korea, Europe, I can play on any of those servers."

[TTC · Road: The first server, is it still the same account as before? I'll add you.]

Jian Rong said, "Okay."

Road swiftly left Jian Rong's livestream.

Half a minute later, a friend request popped up in the bottom right corner of Jian Rong's screen.

He clicked 'accept' at once.

The in-game voice chat was on, and Lu Boyuan's voice was a little distant, as if he was talking to someone beside him.

"*Ge*, I'm online, hurry up and invite me. I learned how to play Swain support, he's really strong! In the lane, I can definitely burst down the enemy…" Xiao Bai paused and looked over doubtfully. "*Ge*, why is your lobby full?"

"Someone came last minute." Lu Boyuan said, "Go play with Qian-*ge* first for a while."

Xiao Bai: "??"

His eyes were wide. "Who came? Is he as awesome as I am? *Ge*, you better think this over carefully. Right now you're Diamond 4, if you lose two more games you'll drop to Platinum. For one of the members of the world's top four teams to be Platinum ranked, does that even make sense???"

Pine interjected coolly, "If he queues with you, never mind Platinum, he'll be rushing straight towards Gold."

"What BS!" Xiao Bai asked, "*Ge*, who in the world came?"

"A little fan." Lu Boyuan said, "He sent me many gifts, so I'll play a few games with him."

Jian Rong: "…"

With a stiff expression, Jian Rong chose his roles and turned a blind eye to the barrage's ridicule.

Xiao Bai was also stunned. How much money would a gift have to cost for his *ge* to attach importance to it?

A few seconds later, he asked carefully, “How much money did that fan send you?”

“Don’t know.” Lu Boyuan seemed to remember something, and he chuckled. “Apparently, in total it’s enough to buy an illegal internet cafe?”

Xiao Bai: “?”

Jian Rong: “……??”

Jian Rong didn’t even need to think to know that it was some story his fans cooked up.

He turned off his in-game mic and coldly spat out, “…next time, can you all say something a little more high quality? Grow up.”

Xiao Bai finally shut his mouth, and a momentary silence descended in the voice chat.

“Yesterday you left too quickly, so I didn’t have a chance to ask.” Lu Boyuan suddenly spoke. “Did you get injured?”

A few seconds passed before Jian Rong realized that the question was directed at him.

“I didn’t.” Jian Rong said, “No injuries.”

Lu Boyuan let out an “en.”

For some reason, Jian Rong suddenly recalled Lu Boyuan’s sweater. He licked his lips. “I couldn’t find my footing at the time. When I crashed into you, did it hurt at…”

“It didn’t. You’re very light.” Lu Boyuan interrupted him. “You’re playing fill?”

Jian Rong: "…en."

The second role that Jian Rong selected was fill, meaning that he would fill in for whatever role was missing in their match. To him, if it wasn't mid, all the other roles were pretty much the same.

The rank was low, so they got matched into a game very fast.

Jian Rong took a glance at the role distribution. Road got jungler, and he was filling in as support.

Jian Rong was the last to pick. As soon as the ADC in the team finished choosing his champion, he started to type in the chat.

[Only Love Xiao Qian: Does support know how to play Yuumi?]

Jian Rong's brows wrinkled.

Yuumi was a champion that was fairly popular in professional competitions and tested her teammates' coordination to the max. Usually, very few people played her in ranked.

After all, Yuumi had to be attached to her teammates most of the time, and if you met someone who didn't know how to play her, it would be the same as tethering yourself to a useless AFKer. Moreover, she was also a glass cannon and would easily die if left alone. Jian Rong felt that playing this champion was the same as just AFKing[2].

Without waiting for Jian Rong to reply, the ADC sent another line.

[Only Love Xiao Qian: Pick Yuumi, fast.]

Jian Rong sneered and typed: *Did I come to play a game or did I come to serve you? Get lost.*

Right before Jian Rong hit send, the sound of a cup being set down traveled through his headphones.

Jian Rong slammed on the brakes just in time, moving his finger from the enter key to the backspace key, deleting all the words that he had just typed out.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Okay.]

Jian Rong picked Yuumi.

[???]

[You don't even curse out this kind of dumbass? I'm really looking down on you.]

Jian Rong ignored the barrage and jumped onto the ADC the moment he entered the game, beginning his endless AFK journey.

Unexpectedly, not only was this ADC quite controlling, he was also extremely trash.

By the time he let the third siege minion slip away, Jian Rong finally couldn't bear it anymore.

He typed: *Are these siege minions related to your ancestors? Don't have the heart to kill them?*

But what he sent out was—[Just Watch My Gameplay: *Jiayou*, don't let any more minions slip through, okay?]

The ADC was ganked twice in a row by the enemy before he accused Jian Rong of not protecting him well.

Jian Rong typed: *Even if laozi gathered all the cows on the prairie there wouldn't be enough milk[3] to keep you alive.*

What he sent out was—[Just Watch My Gameplay: My apologies, don't get ganked anymore either, okay?]

The ADC was solo killed by the enemy, and he once again interrogated Jian Rong about why he wasn't at his side.

Jian Rong typed: *Even if laozi bought ten pairs of shoes it wouldn't be enough to keep up with the speed at which you die.*

What he sent out was—[Just Watch My Gameplay: My fault, next time wait until I get there before fighting with them, okay?]

Jian Rong swallowed his anger for twenty minutes before he finally exploded after the top lane's Teemo spoke.

[Xiao Qian: Support, are you a woman?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: ??]

[Xiao Qian: Why on earth are you speaking so coyly when you talk to my husband? Can't you see our IDs?]

Jian Rong never thought that he would be associated with the word "coy" in this lifetime.

Before he could free himself from the shock, the top laner sent something else.

[Xiao Qian: Get off of my husband]

Dammit.

If it wasn't for the fact that this champion has no choice but to stay attached to a teammate, I would have long since abandoned your husband's corpse in the fucking wilderness.

Jian Rong already felt extremely stifled after being forced to support a noob, so now, he instantly blew up on the spot.

Jian Rong stood inside his base, and the speed at which he typed grew several times faster than before.

"No way no way your husband is already this level of trash yet you're still worried there are girls in this game who want to hook up with him? If this kind of junk was tossed into the Bronze ranks even the girls there would pinch their nose and tell him to stay away from them right? Also how do you have the nerve to pull out and play this Teemo of yours with a 20% win rate? You two should just hold a husband and wife duo master chef competition[4] in the bot lane together __"

With a whoosh, their team's jungler, Camille, appeared in the base.

"Little kitty[5]." The man who had been playing the game quietly the entire time suddenly spoke up in the voice chat.

Jian Rong subconsciously responded: "Here!"

Lu Boyuan laughed very lightly. "Come onto me[6]."

"…"

Jian Rong's throat bobbed, and he expressionlessly deleted the long string of abuse he had typed out in the chat before he swiftly hit a skill and flew onto Road. "…oh."

Translation Notes

1. *Zaun is the second China Telecom server for LoL. As far as I can tell, there's a Chinese meme about Zaun players all being trash-talking trolls, but in general being a "Zaun player" is just associated with being very good at insulting and flaming others* ^
2. *In case it's not clear, Yuumi literally attaches herself to an ally, which is why it feels like AFKing* ^
3. *In Chinese, they refer to heals as "milk" lol* ^
4. *I think master chef competition is in reference to the fact that "trash/noob" in Chinese is 菜, which also means "food dish/veggie." So basically he's saying that they might as well have a noob party in the bottom lane. Needless to say, Jian Rong is really very creative LOL* ^
5. *Yuumi is, in fact, a little kitty. They actually call her "kitty" in Chinese, not Yuumi (see pic below)* ^

6. *In case anyone's curious, what he actually says here is "到我身上来", or literally "come onto my body" more or less. It sounds a lot more awkward in*

English, so I've just left it as "come onto me," but it's what they've been using this whole time to refer to Yuumi sticking to her teammates. Though LBY makes it sound a lot more flirtatious lmao ^

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ICDI Chapter 11: Right now, I'm his jungler.

The little kitty leisurely and contentedly lounged on Camille, and even the game screen seemed much more pleasing to look at than before.

After leaving that useless ADC, Jian Rong was finally in the mood to interact with the barrage.

[The hell was that 'oh', consider this as *laozi* begging you, go back to the fountain and flame him, okay?]

[What are you doing? Are you playing a typing game??]

[The empathy level for this game is way too strong, I'm already digging this e-couple's grave]

[Why does your keyboard have a backspace key? A proper troll never leaves a way out for himself, understand?]

[Didn't you say that points could be gained back, but you could never let a dumbass slip by? Going back on your word??]

Jian Rong turned off his in-game mic and, after opening the livestream room to confirm that Road wasn't there, he finally spoke lazily.

"Tsk… the reason why the game environment has been so shallow these past few years is all because of players like you people," Jian Rong said. "If a teammate only makes a small mistake, how can you insult their parents? Brothers and sisters, maintain some quality when on the web, okay? You

should be magnanimous and amicable, and give your teammates a chance to grow."

[Just shut the fuck up already, if you say another "okay?" *laozi* will blow up your livestream room]

[What? Is the room mod holding a knife and standing behind you watching you stream?]

[How come I keep getting deja vu from this disgusting behavior of his? I feel like he also acted like a weak chicken the last time Road came to the stream.]

[Of course he's pretending to be well-behaved~ he's scared that his idol won't duo Q with him in the next match.]

"How am I pretending?" Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow. "Haven't I always been like this…"

Before he could finish, someone suddenly spoke from headphones. "Anyone there."

Jian Rong rushed to turn on the mic. "I'm here."

Lu Boyuan killed a monster and glanced at the high-spirited accessory hanging off of his body. "Why aren't you typing anymore?"

Jian Rong: "…"

The barrage was full of "*hahaha*", and Jian Rong clawed at his hair again. "I was chatting with a friend just then."

A few seconds later, he added, “I’m done now.”

“Oh.” Lu Boyuan looked at his own stream’s barrage. “Your water friends came over here again.”

Jian Rong: “?”

Lu Boyuan said, “They said that you wrote an entire book in the chat.”

“……”

Jian Rong silently rubbed his face before he lifted a hand and banned the people who were laughing the most joyfully in the barrage.

After leaving the bot lane, Jian Rong never attached himself to anyone else. Even in the team fight, he only followed Road, and he didn’t even spare a single glance at the low health teammates next to him.

In the last team fight, their other three teammates were engaged in the jungle. By the time Road made it over, the only one remaining on their side was a low health ADC. The ADC kept inching towards them, wanting Jian Rong to attach to him and give him a heal.

Jian Rong didn’t move. After healing Road back to full health and releasing his ult, he simultaneously flashed a Mastery Emote at their team’s low health ADC.

Even though he didn’t type anything, the meaning was approximately—“Go die, dumbass.”

After the game ended, Lu Boyuan had just returned to the lobby when he felt the person next to him staring at him.

He tilted his head. “What is it?”

Xiao Bai was looking at him resentfully. “*Ge*, the little fan that you were talking about earlier who you said smashed enough gift money on you to buy an illegal internet cafe, does he have dyed blue hair, is he super scrawny, and does he also really like to scowl?”

Lu Boyuan didn’t say anything, but it could be considered as a tacit agreement.

“Why is that little bluenette still lingering around!” Xiao Bai said, “Is he bothering you? *Ge*, I’m not trying to badmouth someone behind their back, it’s just that this person really doesn’t have any character. It’s better if you don’t get involved with him, so you can avoid…”

“I was the one who asked him to queue with me.” Lu Boyuan interrupted him.

Xiao Bai was stupefied. “?”

After two seconds, Lu Boyuan seemed to remember something else. “Also, my in-game mic is still on.”

Xiao Bai: “……”

When Xiao Bai sat back down, he was still comforting himself.

It'll be fine, in any case they didn't have anything to do with each other. They wouldn't even see each other in the future, so at the most he would just be insulted a bit in that little bluenette's livestream.

What's more, everything he said was true!

That tiny bit of confidence that he managed to recover completely vanished the moment he and Qian-*ge* entered a new game.

Only to see the ID next to the enemy's jungler, Graves, read: Road.

And the ID of the enemy's mid laner, Talon, was: Just Watch My Gameplay.

Meanwhile, for this game, he had ended up filling in as the mid laner.

Black streaked across Xiao Bai's vision, and he wanted to immediately quit the game.

Yuan Qian said, "Can you do it? Want to change lanes?"

"Your champion can't play mid." Xiao Bai crinkled up his face. "It's fine, I'm more useful than he is in late game, I'll just hide under the tower[1] and farm… as if he could forcefully kill me from there?"

Five minutes.

[Just Watch My Gameplay has slain P-Baby's Little Support.]

Nine minutes.

[Just Watch My Gameplay has slain P-Baby's Little Support.]

Twelve minutes.

[Just Watch My Gameplay has slain P-Baby's Little Support.]

Fourteen minutes…

After being solo killed seven times, Xiao Bai was grabbed by the enemy jungler, Graves, while trying to take his own side's blue buff. Soft vaulted over from the other side of the wall and easily took Xiao Bai's dog head.

Xiao Bai collapsed. "*Ge*—I'm already this tragic! Yet you still helped him gank me!!!"

"There's no helping it." Lu Boyuan's tone of voice was casual. "Right now, I'm his jungler."

The moment he said that, Jian Rong, who was in the middle of stealing the enemy's blue buff, abruptly tossed out a flash skill on the spot.

Thankfully, Lu Boyuan had already left the jungle, so for the time being nobody in the game realized that he had wasted a summoner spell.

[Damn, your hand shook just because Road said one thing, grow up??]

[I'm going to go to Xiao Bai's livestream and tell him that you don't have a flash.]

[Son, you just wait, Dad will go over to God Lu's livestream right now and help you propose marriage]

"The other side's mid laner is too noob, I'll let him have a flash."

After Jian Rong finished woodenly saying that, he opened the livestream webpage and bestowed a nice 99-day speaking ban present on the water friend who mentioned proposing marriage.

—

On the weekend, Lu Boyuan was called into the meeting room by Ding-*ge* the moment he woke up.

"I took a look at the videos that you sent, and I also sent a copy over to the other coaches." Ding-*ge* paused briefly. "All those livestream replays, you found them yourself?"

Lu Boyuan was still sleepy, and he let out an "en." "I only went through this year's, there should be even more if you go back further."

"Soft does play well. He reacts very fast, and his playstyle is better than all of the new trainees we found this year." Ding-*ge* wasn't stingy with the compliments, but he added, "However, his temperament is too reckless. Even while he's playing a farming-type champion like Orianna, he still dares to run straight over to the enemy and attack head on, completely disregarding whether his teammates are there or not… You should also know, competitions cannot be dependent only on one person's ability. Good teamwork and overall situational awareness is more important."

"You can train teamwork and awareness," Lu Boyuan said mildly. "Innate talent is different."

"True. But he's never participated in any professional training before. There's no way I can allow a player who's never had any experience before

become the team's starting mid laner…"

"I was a newcomer back then as well." Lu Boyuan interrupted him.

Ding-*ge* was rendered speechless for a moment. "There aren't that many natural talents like you in this world."

"So we have to find them." Lu Boyuan said, "Ignoring everything else, if you chose any mid laner in LPL right now and asked them to solo him, there's no guarantee that they could beat him."

Ding-*ge* hadn't expected his evaluation of Soft to be so high, and he lifted an eyebrow in surprise.

Lu Boyuan was correct; Soft's personal ability was extremely strong. Ding-*ge* had gone back and asked the others in the team before, and he'd learned that Soft had quite the reputation about a year ago on the Korean server. In addition, rumor had it that he was also very young, so he had enormous potential to grow in the future, which was why he had been included in the team's consideration list.

"I know. So my current recommendation is: recruit him into the team first, let him train a little, and then go from there." Ding-*ge* took out a piece of paper. "But… he might not necessarily want to join either. I asked around and found out that three teams wanted to recruit him before, including PUD. He rejected them all."

Speaking of that, Ding-*ge* paused. "Reportedly, one of those teams asked him three times, but he thought they were being too annoying, so he blacklisted them."

The corners of Lu Boyuan's lips tugged up silently.

Ding-*ge* also laughed. "Whatever, I'll try to contact him first. If he's willing, we can continue discussing from that point on."

After Ding-*ge* left, Lu Boyuan went to the kitchen to heat up the congee that the auntie left behind.

He leaned next to the stove and pulled out his phone to forward their sponsor's Weibo advertisement.

Before locking his phone, Lu Boyuan remembered something, and entered "Soft" into the search bar.

Soft had very few posts on his microblog. The newest one was posted half an hour ago.

[Soft: Cat. [photo]]

The photo was of a slightly dirty cat. The youth's hand was slim and pale, and it was currently scratching the cat under its chin.

Even though Soft seldom posted on Weibo, he interacted quite a lot with his fans, to the point that his most recent reply was only a few seconds ago.

[Met a dumbass in ranked today, the way he spoke was really similar to you.]

[Soft: Am I similar to your dad]

[The kitty is so cute!]

[Soft: En]

[Soft's Only Fanclub: I sent your mini essay and spiritual flash from the other day to Road already, don't know if your idol looks at PMs or not, waiting for a reply [prayer hands]]

[Soft: Blacklisted, get lost]

Jian Rong laid on his bed while he fought with his fans in the Weibo comments.

After he lazily responded to one comment, ten more would appear. He yawned and casually took a glimpse—

[TTC · Road replied to Soft's Only Fanclub: Didn't find your PM.]

Jian Rong's mind went numb, and he almost deleted Weibo then and there.

Translation Notes

1. *Xiao Bai means he'll just stay within range of his turret/tower and farm, so if Jian Rong gets close he'll have to dive and eat the tower's damage* ^

Yan: Hahahaha Xiao Bai can't wait for you to eat your words

Wei: Who needs enemies when you have friends like Jian Rong's fans….

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ICDI Chapter 12: This bluenette troll! Is actually a minor whose hair hasn’t even all grown in!

Jian Rong flipped over and clicked on the string of letters.

TTC · Road, Follow 71, Follower 5.81M. Weibo Verified: TTC Esports Club Pro Player.

He exited the page, and then opened it again.

After repeating that action five times, something finally changed on the page—Road’s following count became 72.

The “Already Following” in the bottom right corner of the screen also changed into “Mutual Following.”

Jian Rong: “…”

There were already more than fifty replies from fans under that comment.

[Sorry God Lu, I was only shooting my mouth off just then, I’ll go screenshot it right now from the livestream replay.]

[Ah? I actually saw Road in a streamer’s comment section???]

[I never realized this before, but nearly all of this dumbass streamer’s likes are of Road’s posts.]

[The first account he followed on Weibo was Road’s too…]

Jian Rong shot off of his bed at light speed, turned on his computer, and deleted that livestream replay; the entire series of actions was direct and efficient.

He sat cross-legged on his gaming chair and gnawed on his fingertips, agonizing over Road's message.

After hesitating for ten minutes, he finally replied with a [crying] emoticon.

By the time Lu Boyuan saw that emoticon, three days had already passed.

He had way too many Weibo notifications, and that day he had only randomly chosen to respond as well, so he hadn't thought too much of it.

He was about to check whether that fan sent him a PM or not when Xiao Bai suddenly stretched his head over from next to him. "*Ge*, why did Ding-*ge* call us over to the meeting room?"

Lu Boyuan locked his phone and set it down on the table. "Don't know."

It was normal to have internal team meetings. During competition seasons, they could have numerous meetings in a single week, but this time it evidently wasn't a game review meeting.

Several minutes later, Ding-*ge* walked into the meeting room by himself and closed the door immediately after entering.

He got right to the point. "The reason I've called you guys here today is to tell you about Kan."

When he said that, the expressions of everyone present instantly grew more serious.

Even Xiao Bai, who usually always wore a smile, quieted down and leaned back in his chair without saying anything.

Although Kan hadn't played very well these past two seasons, he was still a veteran member of TTC. He had been a part of the club since the moment TTC was established and had fought through the secondary pro league with the team before; he'd even won the World Championships with them.

It could be said that Kan had watched all four players present grow and take the stage.

Ding-*ge* was silent for a few seconds before he said heavily, "The LPL discovered some things."

Instantly, Xiao Bai's nose soured, and he forcefully blinked a few times.

Even Pine, who was the most taciturn player on the team, tilted his head and looked outside the window.

Lu Boyuan's eyelids lowered slightly, his face mostly expressionless. "Is it confirmed?"

"More or less." Ding-*ge* said, "At first, it wasn't that easy to investigate, but two days ago someone contacted the LPL and said they had evidence."

Xiao Bai frowned. "Who?"

"His girlfriend." Ding-*ge* paused. "Or rather, his ex-girlfriend."

"…"

"In a few more days, the results of the investigation should come out. Let's just wait and see."

The atmosphere of the meeting room was gloomy. Ding-*ge* sighed unnoticeably and changed the topic. "There's also another thing. Management is already contacting the new mid laner. They've chosen two people, and the person in charge is in discussions with both of them. I wanted to be completely transparent with you all in advance."

Upon hearing the three words "new mid laner," nobody looked very surprised.

This was just how esports was. There would always be old people leaving, and there would always be new people entering. Every team had to experience generational change in order to maintain the best scores.

The substitute's strength was average, and Kan's condition was spiralling downwards. Adding on the incident this time, it was imperative that TTC recruit a new mid laner.

Yuan Qian breathed in deeply. "Who did they choose?"

Ding-*ge* said: "One is the Korean division's Savior. His contract just expired, and he's interested in joining the LPL this season."

Yuan Qian was shocked. "Savior? He wants to come to our division? How expensive would that have to be?"

Savior was a new mid laner in the Korean division, and he had just joined the professional league two years ago. Even though the team he was currently in was only so-so and had barely managed to enter the knockout stage[1], his personal ability was famously strong. He was the best at farming, and he often was able to step forward and carry the entire team in disadvantageous situations.

The thing that Savior's fans said the most often was: "If you gave Savior some teammates who are actually alive, he would already be a two-time champion by now."

"That you don't have to worry about. The team can even support Road, and you're scared of it not being able to afford a mid laner newcomer?" Ding-*ge* said.

Lu Boyuan noncommittally raised an eyebrow.

Xiao Bai mumbled, "Our team is going to bring in a Korean player? It's going to be so hard to communicate, I definitely don't know how to speak *simida*[2]."

Pine said, "You watch those boring K-dramas all the time and you didn't learn a single phrase?"

"If I could learn just from listening, then I'd be at Tsinghua or Peking University by now. Why would I still be suffering here as a pro gamer with you?" Xiao Bai propped a hand up under his chin and looked at Ding-*ge* again. "Who's the other person?"

Ding-*ge* said, “The other person is a streamer who doesn’t really have any professional experience, a blank slate. But his personal ability is very strong, and he’s a good seed.”

The meeting room descended into a brief silence.

After a beat, Pine knitted his brows and repeated, “Streamer?”

When the esports industry was just starting, many pro players were unearthed by teams from streaming platforms and based on their ranked points. Yuan Qian and Kan were both found in this way.

But after the esports industry slowly grew, every team possessed a well-developed training system, and the trainees had already become the main channel through which the teams found new members.

As for the streamers, that became the optimal job for retired players.

Xiao Bai actually didn’t care. Anyone who management chose definitely wouldn’t be bad. He asked, “Which streaming platform? Do we know him? How come I don’t remember there being some particularly amazing new streamer recently?”

“…you could be considered to know him.” Ding-*ge* said, “Savior’s side is still in discussion. PUD also wants to sign him, so right now both sides are just negotiating the price. Management just finalized the other person, and they’ve already sent someone to go contact him.”

“What’s his name? If I have time, I’ll take a look at his livestream.” Xiao Bai sighed. “I really can’t speak *simida*.”

Ding-*ge* was quiet for a second. “A streamer with dyed blue hair.”

Xiao Bai said, “But if I try really hard, it’s not like I can’t do it. I’ll go buy a Korean textbook right after this.”

“*Pfft*.”

The depressing atmosphere was swept away instantly, and Ding-*ge* and Yuan Qian both laughed out loud. Even Pine, who was always cold and detached, smirked a bit.

Only Xiao Bai collapsed by himself. “No… why do we have to recruit a troll into the team! Which blinded member of management took a liking to him?! Besides abusing noobs in Gold and Platinum, what else can he do!!”

“I took a liking to him.” Lu Boyuan spoke up.

“You… *ge*?” Xiao Bai forcibly swallowed his curses and turned his head, astonished. After a long moment, he asked blankly, “What part of him did you take a liking to?”

Lu Boyuan paused for a little, as if pondering something. He then said, “Every part of him is pretty good.”

Xiao Bai was thoroughly stupefied.

He felt like the bluenette that his *ge* was referring to was a completely different person from the bluenette that he knew.

“Enough.” Ding-*ge* restrained his laughter. “I’m only giving you guys a heads up that right now we’ve selected these two. The final choice is still up

in the air, so don't think too much about it. It's already eight, let's go downstairs and eat dinner first."

Lu Boyuan only stood up from his seat once everyone else had departed.

When he passed Ding-*ge*, he stopped briefly and tilted his head slightly to the side. "What does management plan to do about Kan?"

"What else can they do…" Ding-*ge* said, "They have to announce that he violated his contract."

Lu Boyuan looked down and let out a soft "en" before he turned and left the meeting room.

—

Late at night, 11 p.m., TTC's practice room.

Xiao Bai wandered back and forth outside of a StarTV livestream room. Finally, he still couldn't resist and created a new side account before slipping into Soft's livestream.

At that moment, Jian Rong was eating hot and sour noodles while playing Teamfight Tactics[3].

[What kind of lousy champion did you grab, do you know how to play or not?]

[Stop eating, hurry up and play the game, just how long has it been since you've set up a fan tournament?]

[Soft's Only Fanclub: Why did you blacklist *laozi* on Weibo!!!]

Seeing that last comment, Jian Rong once again recalled his emoticon on Weibo that never received a reply.

He felt unhappy, so he lifted a hand and banned his only fanclub from commenting.

After finishing his hot and sour noodles, Jian Rong was about to open the game when a friend request suddenly popped up from QQ[4].

[Attached message: Are you interested in playing professionally?]

Jian Rong was startled, before he bluntly closed the request.

[Oh shit someone's finally discovered my son's strength?]

[Why reject them ah?]

[Probably a scam, there's a team out there who even wants this piece of trash?]

Xiao Bai, sitting in front of his computer, was about to agree, but then he recalled that his own team really was trying to recruit him, so he had no choice but to resist the impulse to send a mocking comment.

"No particular reason why, just don't want to." Jian Rong said lazily, "I also think it seems like a scam."

[Isn't being a pro player better than being a streamer? And it makes money.]

[Enough with that, only the peak of the pyramid makes money. The subs on those small crappy teams don't even earn 10k[5] in a month. And also, he's just a noob-bullying streamer, he won't be worth a damn in front of experts.]

[Didn't the streamer beat up Tank's Bye last week?]

Xiao Bai instantaneously exploded!

You're the one who was freaking beat up! If you have the skill, then you go face off against him in the lane! Don't you know what specialization of labor is!

"It's enough as long as I earn your money."

After Jian Rong said that, he saw a wave of swears cross the barrage, and he couldn't help but burst out laughing. "Bye? He plays support, it's very normal for him not to be able to beat me in mid."

Xiao Bai let out a *"hmph"* through his nose.

At least this little bluenette knew how to be tactful.

Following that, Jian Rong spoke again. "But if I used a support champ and soloed him, he still wouldn't be able to beat me."

Dammit!

Will you die if you act like a human for more than half a fucking minute!!

Xiao Bai gripped his keyboard and advanced forward bravely: [Solo my ass! This is a five player game! Bye is ten thousand times more useful than you in a team!!!]

This comment floated across thousands of others in the barrage, and Jian Rong didn't see it at all.

He continued to answer other people's questions. "There are plenty of teams that come to look for me… why don't I go? Already said it, don't like playing professionally. I like playing the game by myself. It feels great to solo kill, team operations don't suit me."

[What if a big team comes to find you?]

"Big team? Such as?" Jian Rong said indifferently, "PUD? Not interested, their specialty is playing late game, a model case of team operations."

"OYG? Also not interested, they like to revolve around their bot lane in game, I don't want to babysit other people."

"TTC…" Jian Rong paused for a moment before he lifted his eyes and peeked at the upper right corner of his screen.

As if he was confirming that a certain person wasn't on his money-smashing list.

Xiao Bai subconsciously sat up straight and listened.

"Their support Bye just looks like someone who holds a grudge. I've solo killed him so many times, he probably hates me deep inside."

Jian Rong purposefully didn't mention Road, but when he swept a glance over the barrage, some dumbasses were taking advantage of the situation to spread slander again.

So Jian Rong still couldn't help himself. "However, I do like their jungler, he's very—"

Very strong.

Pushes the limits of gameplay.

Has flexible strategies and tactics.

Jian Rong wasn't able to say any of these.

Xiao Bai was about to smash the table and curse him out when the livestream window suddenly went dark and a little crying character appeared on the screen. Next to it, a large row of text was written—

[New Rule Revision: Since this streamer is still underage, the platform will temporarily lock this livestream room!]

Xiao Bai: "???"

Xiao Bai jumped up from his chair excitedly and saw Lu Boyuan standing behind him the moment he turned around.

"*Ge*—" Xiao Bai exclaimed. "This bluenette troll! Is actually a minor whose hair hasn't even all grown in!!"

Lu Boyuan was holding a cup, and he looked down at the desktop monitor. “Mn.”

Xiao Bai hadn’t been wearing headphones, so Lu Boyuan had heard the livestream’s entire conversation.

He was even younger than Lu Boyuan had expected.

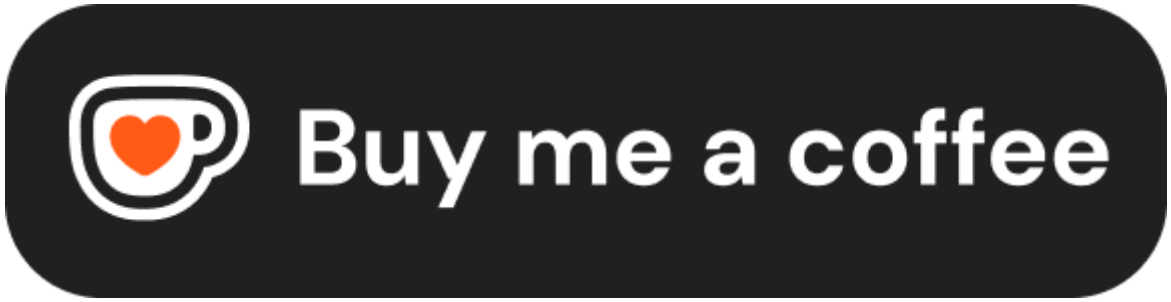
Xiao Bai was about to say something else, but Lu Boyuan spoke first. “Since he’s just a kid, don’t hold a grudge over whatever he’s said about you before.”

Translation Notes

1. *To participate in LoL’s World Championship, there’s the play-in stage (group stage and knockout stage) and then the main event (group stage, knockout stage, quarterfinals, semifinals, and then the finals). More and more teams get eliminated after each stage* ^
2. *Simida (思密达) is Chinese slang to refer to Korean (the language). It’s a loan word that plays off of the Korean verb ending ‘seumnida’ (습니다)* ^
3. *Teamfight Tactics is LoL’s autochess game. It’s kind of like the name implies – it’s an autobattle/strategy kind of game but with LoL champions* ^
4. *QQ is another Chinese instant messaging/social media app* ^
5. *About $1,500* ^

Yan: LBY always looking out for our baby~ Also Jian Rong is, in fact, a minor right now – to be more exact, he's 17 and will turn 18 in about one or two months! Nothing happens between him and LBY romantically while he's underage, so don't worry ☺ just a lot of cute interactions!

Wei: We set up a Ko-fi (button below)!!



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ICDI Chapter 13: [Seeking Employment]

Bonus Ko-fi Chapter 1/6~ Special thanks to Teddy, Noelle, and Anonymous for the Ko-fis!

Late at night, at a barbeque stand next to the street.

A few men were guzzling alcohol, their arms bared, voices rough. Empty alcohol bottles were scattered all over the floor, and the slightest touch made them clang together loudly.

Their entire bodies were red from drinking, and all the other customers stayed far away from them upon seeing that. The only one near them was a teenager.

A few dozen skewers were placed in front of the youth. One leg was hooked over the other disdainfully, a hat placed casually on his thigh; his hair was an attention-grabbing blue. He was currently eating skewers as he talked to someone on the phone.

“I told you before that the platform was going to undergo reforms, but I didn’t think it would be like this.” Shiliu paused for a second and coughed lightly. “And I completely forget that you’re only seventeen…”

Jian Rong swallowed a piece of lamb and corrected him stiffly, “Seventeen and a half.”

His unemployment arrived too out of the blue. Twenty lamb skewers were already sitting in his stomach, but Jian Rong still hadn’t truly recovered yet.

“But it’s not too bad, waiting a few months until you’re of age and coming back to stream then. Your audience is fairly fixed, you won’t lose too many of them.” Shiliu said, “At least you’ll get a chance to relax for a few months, travel a bit. Want me to take you to have some fun in Disney?”

Jian Rong could make out Shiliu’s brotherly way of speaking, and he said coldly, “Why the hell don’t you just say you’ll take me to the kiddie playground?”

He drank a mouthful of alcohol to cleanse his palate and spoke again. “I’m not worried about streaming.”

It was just that he actually couldn’t think of something to do now that he was suddenly no longer streaming.

“How about finding a job to keep busy?” Shiliu guessed what he was thinking and pondered over it. “Take advantage of your youth, you can go do some part-time work and experience life a bit. Otherwise, when you start streaming, you won’t have time to do anything else again. Or is there anything else you really want to do?”

Jian Rong stared at the fizzing liquid in the bottle and paused for a beat. “Make money.”

“…” At first, Shiliu wanted to say, ‘*you’re just a kid, why so materialistic*,’ but he was also afraid of being cursed out, so he forcefully restrained himself.

He glanced up at the streamer group chat, which was chatting energetically, and suddenly thought of something. “How about you go give dating a try? A few months will pass by in a flash, really.”

Jian Rong: "?"

"*Ge* can introduce someone to you," Shiliu said. "Do you want someone older or younger than you? It's not very easy to find someone younger than you though. Or what type do you like? Actually, I know many female streamers who are quite interested in getting to know you…"

"*Beep*—"

Jian Rong hung up decisively and concentrated on eating his skewers.

After completely demolishing all the skewers, Jian Rong picked up his phone again and opened Weibo.

His mood earlier hadn't been very good, so he had just sent out a brief post about stopping streaming before leaving his apartment.

[Soft: Special circumstances, no longer streaming, will return later.]

Looking at the four thousand comments below the post, Jian Rong felt his eyelid twitch; his intuition told him that it wasn't a good thing.

Sure enough.

There were a few other underage streamers who had also been forced to stop streaming like him. The comment sections of their announcement posts were all filled with things like *"kiss kiss," "pats head," "waiting for your return."*

But Jian Rong's comment section—

[Fuck, so he was actually a little dumbass!]

[Your hair hasn't even all grown in, yet you're out here talking back to your seniors every day?]

[Phew, *laozi*'s ears can finally have some peace and quiet for a while]

Jian Rong laughed out of anger, and he selected a few comments to reply to while drinking more alcohol.

[Dumbass darling, what do you plan on doing from now on?]

[Soft: Don't be gross. Open a barbeque stand.]

[Will you starve to death if you don't stream? Come to Hangzhou and kowtow to me three times, I'll support you.]

[Soft: Don't worry, Dad has more money than you.]

[Soft's Only Fanclub 1: *Wuwuwu* son don't be sad, you may be unlucky in business, but you might be lucky in love [photo] water friends who like Soft, remember to go to Road's Weibo to like and bump the comment~ uwu![1]]

Didn't he blacklist this crappy fanclub a long time ago?

Jian Rong frowned faintly and subconsciously clicked on the image attached to the comment.

It was a screenshot of a comment under Road's newest Weibo post.

[Soft's Only Fanclub 1: Before Soft's account was locked, he released a big confession. He said bluntly, "I like TTC's jungler the most, he's really

awesome.” The video is in your PMs, God Lu please check it out!]

There were a bunch of replies underneath too—

[Didn’t he say “he’s really handsome”?]

[He said “he’s really charming” thank you]

[Were his original words not “he’s really awesome, begging my daddy water friends to go help me ask for his hand in marriage”?]

The comment had 6,000 likes, even more than the number of freaking comments underneath his own Weibo post, firmly occupying the top comment position.

When he saw the last reply, Jian Rong suddenly choked and covered his mouth while he swallowed the alcohol. He lowered his head and coughed until his cheeks were flushed red. Even the group of bros nearby couldn’t help but look over.

Jian Rong picked up a napkin and roughly wiped his mouth before he gritted his teeth and started typing.

[Soft replied to Soft’s Only Fanclub 1: GTFO, Dad is deactivating from Weibo 88[2]]

The next day, StarTV’s representative came to find him.

He said that recently, top management was being extremely strict and had prohibited minors from streaming, ordering StarTV to comply and reform.

The notice arrived both urgently and at the last minute, which was why so many livestream rooms had been locked abruptly.

Jian Rong was woken up by the call. He closed his eyes. “Just tell me what the proposed solution is.”

“… it’s like this. Our platform’s contract with you was originally two years long anyway, so it’ll expire next month. We are interested in continuing to work with you.”

Jian Rong let out an “oh” and said after a few seconds, “I want to raise the salary.”

Two years ago, he was in desperate need of money, and he was also a minor on top of that. He didn’t have an audience to rely on, so the platform gave him an extremely low base salary, and he didn’t receive a particularly high percentage of the gifts either.

That led to his income still being much lower than the income of other streamers at the same level as him, even though he was currently ranked among the top streamers in terms of popularity in LoL’s streaming category.

The other party wasn’t surprised either. “Okay, we can discuss that later when drawing up the contract. I will inform management of your request.”

Jian Rong said, “En, hanging up now.”

“Wait a moment.” The representative quickly stopped him. “There’s something else.”

“Our platform is planning on establishing a LoL team sometime soon, and we’re currently recruiting talented players. I’m not sure if you’re interested or not?” The representative said, “The tryouts start on the seventh next month, and it’ll last two weeks…”

“Not interested.” Jian Rong cut him off.

“The team that we launch will directly purchase a place in the LPL, so you won’t have to start playing from the secondary league. The signing bonus is negotiable.” The representative continued to do his best. “We’ll also give you some concessions in terms of the platform’s streaming contract…”

“Not interested, hanging up now.”

While Jian Rong was brushing his teeth, Shiliu called him and asked why he rejected the offer to join the team.

“You get your information quite fast.” Jian Rong spat out the foam. “Not interested in their team.”

“Are you not interested in playing professionally either?” Shiliu said, “I don’t believe that. Every top player has more or less thought about the path of playing professionally, you’ve definitely also considered it before.”

Jian Rong put the phone on speaker and stooped to wash his face. He didn’t answer him.

“Could it be that you have some dark shadow hanging over it?” Shiliu guessed.

Jian Rong said, “No.”

He really didn’t. It wasn’t like he hadn’t thought about playing professionally at first, but its monthly income was too shameful; trainees only received 800 yuan[3] a month, not including food and rent. That tiny amount of money wasn’t even enough to pay for a month of his grandpa’s medicine.

“Then why not give it a try? Right now, contracts are all approximately two years long, and some short ones are even only a year long. I believe that you can definitely play well enough to get some good scores. When the time comes, even if you retire on the spot, your streaming popularity will more than double from what it currently is.”

Shiliu paused momentarily. “Actually, I also know a team who wants to contact you. You can go train with them first, and if that goes well, you can play for them; if not, just come back. In any case, you’re lounging around for the next few months, so just treat it as earning some extra money.”

“No thanks.” The sound of the water was too loud, so Jian Rong couldn’t hear the last part of what Shiliu was saying very well. He grabbed a towel and wiped his face, his voice indistinct. “Don’t want to join those teams.”

Shiliu said a few more things. Before hanging up, he asked, “Is there no team that you would want to join?”

Almost instantaneously, a corner deep in his memories softened slightly. A man’s face flashed across Jian Rong’s mind, along with the admission ticket that the man had handed to him.

The admission ticket had been in the man's pocket for too long, so a bit of an indescribable cold fragrance had rubbed off on it.

After hanging up, Jian Rong buried his face in the towel again. He only walked out into the bedroom quite some time later.

He left his apartment to eat breakfast.

The sunlight was just right. Jian Rong lowered his head to drink his soup, but someone passing by suddenly knocked into his table, splashing some liquid onto the brim of his hat.

The other person apologized repeatedly. Jian Rong took off his hat and lowered his eyes, looking at the "Road" that had been soaked by a few drops of soup. After a long pause, he finally said, "It's fine."

—

In the evening. Ding-*ge* returned to the base and walked straight over to the man sitting on the sofa playing video games. He asked, "There are two pieces of bad news, which do you want to hear first?"

Lu Boyuan manipulated his controller and didn't look up. "The worse one."

"Savior chose PUD." Ding-*ge* said, "PUD's boss went crazy and put down an enormous sum of money. We assessed that Savior wasn't worth that price and decided to give him up."

Lu Boyuan made a noise of agreement and beautifully slammed the final boss that Xiao Bai fought five times without beating onto the ground. "The

other news?"

"I sent someone to ask, but Soft has no plans to play professionally," Ding-*ge* said.

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and didn't say anything.

The character in the video game paused briefly before quickly continuing onwards to the next checkpoint.

"But I didn't have particularly high hopes in the first place. If he wanted to play professionally, he would've entered the industry two years ago."

Ding-*ge* sat down next to him. "I also asked around a little. It seems like he was in urgent need of money back then, so he signed an extremely disadvantageous contract with StarTV. This time when he renews the contract, the signing bonus will probably soar up, and it'll be much better than changing tracks to play professionally. After all, no matter how well he plays, he can only receive the newcomer's contract when he just joins the team."

His phone chimed, and Lu Boyuan played for a little more before pausing the game to check it out.

The chime was from a QQ email.

Ding-*ge*: "Forget it, in any case choosing him was also a gamble. He might not necessarily be suitable for the professional arena."

Originally, Lu Boyuan wanted to clear away the email notification, but he accidentally clicked on it. He swept a look over it; the new email's subject only contained two words—

[Seeking employment.]

There was a lot of spam in his inbox. Lu Boyuan clicked on the "select all" button and was about to delete them when he spotted one of the email previews below.

Ding-*ge* sighed. "I heard Xiao Bai say that he's your fan, so I thought that he would at the very least consider it a bit. I didn't think that he would directly refuse and not even give us a chance to discuss it with him. Never mind, I'll filter through the candidates again…"

"No need." Lu Boyuan interrupted him.

Ding-*ge* looked over, puzzled, only to see Lu Boyuan scrolling through his email, head lowered.

After scrolling to the bottom, Lu Boyuan smiled imperceptibly. He tossed his phone towards Ding-*ge* before he picked up the controller and continued playing the game.

Ding-*ge* quickly caught the phone and subconsciously glanced down—

[Seeking employment.]

Name: Jian Rong
Gender: Male

Age: 17

Height: 175 cm

Weight: 54 kg

…

Game ID: Soft

Proficiency Level: Was once ranked 4th in the Korean server's Challenger tier, was once in the national server's Challenger tier

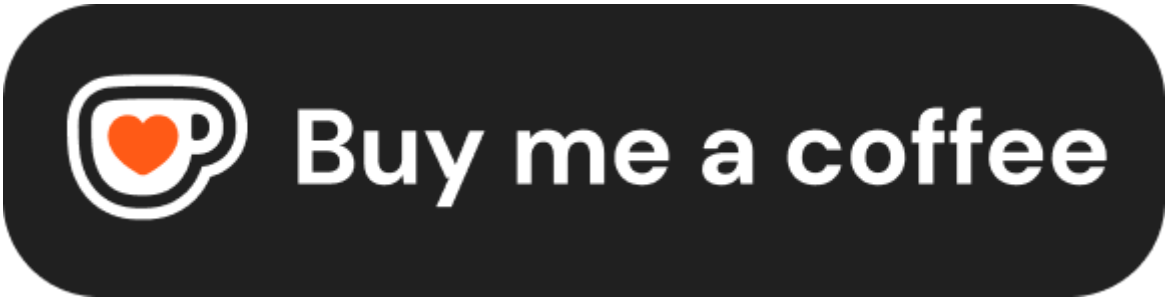
Applying For: TTC Esports Club's LoL Branch – Mid Laner

Translation Notes

1. *The raws don't actually say uwu, but it says '啾咪' (jiu mi), which is basically just a cute way to end a statement but it in itself doesn't actually have much meaning (I think)? The emoticon equivalent is ^.< if that helps. If anyone has a better way to translate this lmk but I kind of just went with the closest English slang lol* ^
2. *88 is pronounced 'ba ba', which sounds like 'bye bye'* ^
3. *Roughly $117.* 😮 ^

Yan: Oh Jian Rong, you're so silly hahaha. In case anyone's curious (and like me also doesn't use the metric system bc the US likes to be ~special~), Jian Rong is approximately 5'9 and weighs 119 lbs. Everyone makes fun of him for being short but he really isn't that short??! Also don't be silly and drink outside alone (like Jian Rong) if you're underage. :') Drink responsibly! With someone like Road!

Wei: Poor Jian Rong getting taken advantage of by StarTV ;-; It's okay my son now you get to go play with Road!



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ICDI Chapter 14: Rebellious stage.

Jian Rong sent the email from the barbeque stand.

Before, he had often ordered takeout from this store, so now that he had nothing else to do, he decided that he might as well go and eat there in person.

When the boss saw that he came two days in a row, he happily gave Jian Rong a bottle of beer on the house.

Jian Rong wasn't an alcoholic, but he liked to drink ice-cold beer while eating barbeque, so he didn't refuse and thanked the boss before lowering his head to look at his phone again.

After he consumed half the bottle, Shiliu's "*is there no team that you would want to join*" started to spin around his head mindlessly again.

Just like the other top players, of course Jian Rong had thought about playing professionally before. He had even once gone to seek out an esports club.

At that time, one of the teams in that esports club had just won the championship. The team's future seemed unlimited, and an enormous number of newcomers wanted to try and squeeze their way in, even at the cost of low pay. And from those several hundred people, Jian Rong had successfully been chosen.

Later, because he had given a notice of departure to the club the very day of the tryouts, he had apologized many times to the other side over the phone.

Jian Rong stopped that train of thought and absentmindedly continued to browse Weibo.

After replying to his fans, he had created a new Weibo side account the previous night. Without a bunch of random comments or a pile of senseless mentions, his entire Weibo interface seemed much calmer.

He followed more blogs on his side account than on his main account. Yesterday, Weibo had recommended many people to him, and he had directly clicked on the “follow all” button.

So now, when he refreshed the homepage, many new posts jumped out at once—

[Those Esports News: Confirmed info. Korean pro player Savior’s old contract has ended, and he’ll be playing in the LPL next season. Currently five clubs are fighting over him, including TTC and PUD.]

Jian Rong stared at “TTC” for a few seconds before scrolling down to the comments.

[There’s no problem with PUD’s mid laner though? Why bring Savior in??]

[Just by seeing TTC I know it’s fake news, how many years has TTC played with an all Chinese team by now.]

[What era is it, who still cares whether the team is all Chinese or not? The true kings are the ones who can prove it with their scores. How many times has TTC only placed in the top 4? They really might as well just die in the top 4.]

[Being able to place in the top 4 multiple times means that they have the ability to win the championship. Dumbass anti, can you use your head a little before slandering?]

[Ah TTC, they're in dire need of a mid laner right now. And Savior is so strong, he also looks very cute, a perfect match with God Lu~~]

Perfect match?

Jian Rong sneered and locked his phone.

A few moments later, Jian Rong unlocked it again and replied to that last comment as if playing the devil's advocate. [Savior is average in early game, he won't be able to link up with the jungler. I don't think that they're a perfect match.]

The other party replied almost instantaneously: [Average?? Okokok, if the most admired new mid laner in the entire LPL isn't a good match with God Lu, then who is? The honorable you?]

Jian Rong read that comment three times, and it was like some switch had been flipped inside him. He pursed his lips and went to hunt for news about TTC recruiting.

He found nothing.

He ruffled his hair and was about to continue searching when a light bulb suddenly went off in his head, and he remembered a string of digits that had lounged in his notes app for several years.

Only after Jian Rong returned home, took a shower, hung his clothes out to dry, and laid down on his bed did that tiny bit of tipsiness fully dissipate.

He stared at the ceiling, extremely sober, his expression as grave as if he had lost a hundred games in a row. His entire mind was filled with—*what the hell did I just do???*

When Shiliu called him, Jian Rong had already been staring at that email regretfully for half an hour.

Shiliu: "This weekend, I—"

"Let me ask you something." Jian Rong buried his face in his pillow.

"?" Hearing Jian Rong's serious tone of voice, Shiliu thought that something had happened, so he frowned and said, "Go ahead."

"If—and I'm saying if," Jian Rong said, "you once accidentally exposed your QQ ID while streaming, and a certain water friend wrote it down. If about… two years later, probably, that water friend sent you a QQ email…"

"Did you encounter a pervert?" Shiliiu asked.

Jian Rong was stupefied, and he abruptly lifted his head from the pillow. "How did it become a pervert??"

“It’s already been two years, yet they’re still sending things to your inbox. If not a pervert, then what?”

Jian Rong: “…but what if it was about something important?”

“It’s not like you’re close to them, how could it be about something important. And who would save a stranger’s QQ for two years?” Shiliu said solemnly, “You have to take this sort of thing seriously. This kind of person is very scary, in reality they would be like those big perverts who would follow you home.”

Jian Rong: “.”

“Be a little more careful next time, it’s extremely easy for a bad person to target you if you expose your QQ ID.” After Shiliu finished warning him, he continued with his previous topic. “This weekend, I’m coming back to Shanghai. Do you want to grab a meal together?”

“Let’s discuss it later.” Jian Rong said emotionlessly, “Goodbye.”

After hanging up, Jian Rong opened up Baidu[1] with a wooden expression on his face. He had just input “*how to recall an email*” when—

Ding.

‘You’ve received a new email.’

Jian Rong nearly threw his phone out the window.

He stared at the notification on the screen for a long time before he climbed off the bed and splashed some cold water on his face. Finally, he

sat back down on his bed and opened the notification.

[Re: Seeking employment.]

"Add on WeChat: DhdRRR."

Jian Rong stared at the letter "R" that denoted the sender of the email, his heart thumping rapidly like the beat of a drum.

He swallowed several times before he went to add a friend on WeChat, face burning.

A few seconds later.

[D: I've accepted your friend request. Now let's chat!]

Jian Rong opened his keyboard and typed things back and forth. "*Hi*" became *"hello"*[2] and "*I'm Soft*" became "*I'm Jian Rong*".

Just when he was about to send the message—

[D: Hi, I'm TTC's manager Ding-*ge*.]

Jian Rong paused.

[R-ong: O.]

[D: ….]

[D: I've looked over your resume, everything looks good. However, we'll have to carry out a two week probationary period before we can discuss what comes next. What time works best for you to come over?]

[R-ong: Anytime.]

[R-ong: What does the RRR at the end of your WeChat ID mean?]

[D: Just, like ahhh?]

[R-ong: O.]

While Ding-*ge* discussed the timing with him, he muttered, “Do all the teenage boys like to play it cool these days…”

Lu Boyuan thought of the teenager’s blue hair, which didn’t match his appearance, and his lips twitched up. He ambiguously let out an “en”. “Rebellious stage.”

—

On Wednesday, Jian Rong got up bright and early.

Today was the day he had arranged with TTC’s manager to start the probationary period. The tryouts would take two weeks, and he would be staying at TTC’s base.

Jian Rong didn’t really have any luggage to speak of, and he was all ready to go with just a backpack. After calling a car, he went downstairs. In the elevator, he saw the ID on his hat and was about to take it off, but halfway through he put it back on properly again.

He was overthinking things. Why would Road personally talk to a probationary member? Even his email inbox was probably overseen by a staff member.

He probably wouldn't meet TTC's entire team so quickly either.

He had asked Shiliu about it before. Trainees or independent players who were chosen by teams all had to undergo a probationary period before they could actually join. The coaches and management would only make the final decision once they received the statistics and evaluations.

Even though every team's internal system was different, it shouldn't vary that much.

[D: Have you left yet?]

[R-ong: Almost there.]

[D: Okay, there haven't been that many people at the base recently because they're on break. I let security know already, so the car should be able to drive into the villa district after you tell them the house number. Once you're in, all you have to do is ring the doorbell to the front door.]

The car drove into the villa district, and Jian Rong looked at the rows of magnificent garden villas before he silently took out his phone and searched up TTC's base on the internet.

The outrageous surface area of the villa written in the summary fit this rich and powerful LPL team very well.

After getting out of the car, Jian Rong walked through the iron gates with his luggage. He passed through the garden in the front and pressed on the doorbell.

He stopped after pressing it once, regardless of whether someone inside heard it or not.

After being drenched by rain, the garden had a damp scent to it. Jian Rong only realized that there was a cactus in a pot placed next to the door once he lowered his head.

The cactus was already so withered that it was turning yellow, on its last breath.

It wasn't an easy task to make such a tenacious plant become like this.

The front door opened, and Jian Rong lifted his head at the noise. When he saw who the person standing behind the door was, that "hello" stalled solidly in his throat.

The man who opened the door was holding onto it with one hand. He wore gray-colored casual clothing, his hair a bit messier than usual, but not in a sloppy way.

His eyelids were lowered, making him appear languid. He was holding a drinking glass, and there was a mole between his thumb and index finger.

Jian Rong was still standing there stunned. The man's gaze moved up slightly and landed on the hat that he was wearing.

Lu Boyuan just woke up, so his voice was low and raspy. He asked, "It's raining outside?"

Jian Rong: "…en?"

“Your hat is wet.”

With a taut expression, Jian Rong stiffly took off his hat and even rubbed it a bit against his clothing.

Lu Boyuan gave a noiseless chuckle before he turned and walked into the house. “Come on in.”

The moment Jian Rong entered, he met the eyes of the people sitting on the sofa.

TTC’s top laner Yuan Qian, bot laner Pine, and support Xiao Bai were currently all sitting in the first floor living room, and it looked like they were discussing something. When they saw him come in, they all stopped talking and stared at him silently.

Especially Xiao Bai. In his silence was awkwardness, and that awkwardness was also mixed with fear.

He used his eyes to ask Yuan Qian: Where’s Ding-*ge*?!

Yuan Qian also used his eyes to answer him: In the bathroom!

The situation was in the middle of a deadlock when a middle-aged woman walked out from the kitchen; it was the base’s cooking auntie. While she undid her apron, she asked, “We’re out of all our condiments, so I have to make a trip to the supermarket. Is there anything you guys want to eat? Auntie will help you buy it.”

Yuan Qian said, “How about we order it online for you, so you don’t have to go all the way there.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine.” The auntie quickly shook her head. “I’ll take the chance to check if there’s any fresh seafood.”

Xiao Bai instantly raised his hand. “I want to eat chips and wafer biscuits!”

Pine said, “Buy some nuts.”

The auntie wrote down what they wanted and asked Lu Boyuan, who was making coffee in the kitchen, “Xiao Lu, do you want anything?”

“No need.” After Lu Boyuan said that, he suddenly paused. “…hold on.”

He turned his head and shot a glance at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong was standing perfectly straight, and he pressed his lips together briefly when Lu Boyuan looked at him.

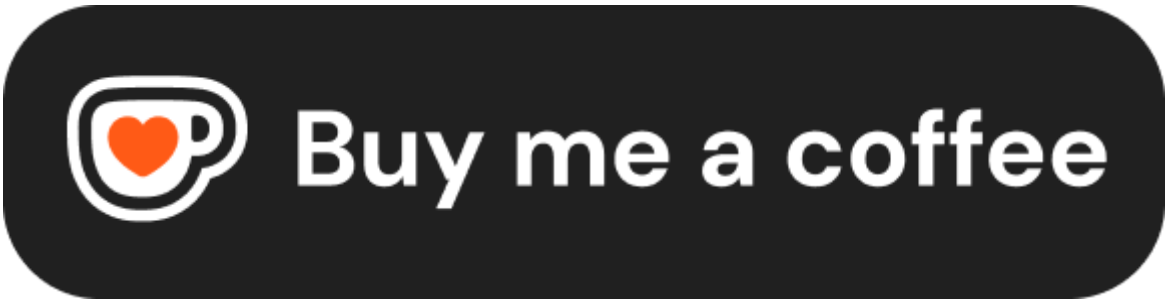
“Buy some milk.” Lu Boyuan withdrew his gaze and said, “Someone in the team is still growing.”

Translation Notes

1. *Baidu is China’s main search engine* ^
2. *He uses ‘你好’ (nihao) first and then changes it to ‘您好’ (ninhao) using the formal ‘you’* ^

Yan: I imagine TTC's base to literally be like a giant house. LOL before I would always imagine these esports club bases to be some fancy high-tech building (think: the bases in the QZGS drama) but I believe TTC's base is just a normal (huge) house that they've converted into use as also the team base.

Wei: Rong Rong is so nervous ahahaha also tsk tsk LBY should've taken the chance to slide into Jian Rong's DMs!!



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ICDI Chapter 15: I've definitely seen this LeBlanc before!

Bonus Ko-fi chapter 2/6~

Only when Ding-*ge* came back did Jian Rong realize that the someone who was "*still growing*" was himself.

Lu Boyuan said "still growing," but in reality, he was just calling him young.

Jian Rong was seventeen years old, how was he young? He would even become an adult a few months from now.

Jian Rong was about to defend himself a bit, but he swallowed what he was going to say when he saw Lu Boyuan's silhouette from the back.

Even though Lu Boyuan was dressed casually, it was still obvious that his shoulders were broad and sturdy, his figure tall and slender. He was entirely devoid of the hunched, rounded shoulders that many professional players had because they sat too long in front of a computer.

Judging from his back, Lu Boyuan had a figure that was extremely superior to other men of his age.

That was also why he was the most eye-catching person among the pro players at every competition.

"Soft, you're here." Ding-*ge* wiped his hands and said, "Take a seat, let's make some simple introductions."

Jian Rong hesitated a few seconds before sitting down on the empty armchair to the far right.

Ding-*ge* sensed that the atmosphere was a bit awkward, but it wasn't a big deal. Young folk, they were all like this when they first met each other.

He said, "This is our team's support, Bye…"

"I know him." Jian Rong paused. "I know everyone."

Xiao Bai thought, *You mock us every day in your livestream, how could you possibly not know us?*

He wanted to drop a few derisive remarks, but when the words got to his mouth, he chickened out again. The only thing he could do was loudly change his sitting posture to indicate his resentment.

Pine frowned from next to him. "Is there a thorn under your butt? Shifting all around."

Xiao Bai: "…none of your business."

Ding-*ge* said, "You guys get to know him too. This is Soft, Jian Rong. He plays mid, and he'll be on a two week probationary period here at the base. He'll eat and live with you all."

After that, Ding-*ge* looked at Jian Rong, hoping that he could say a few lines himself.

Jian Rong held his backpack, and he stared back at Ding-*ge* for a few moments before he said a single: "En."

Ding-*ge*: "…"

"Which Rong is it?" Yuan Qian smiled and asked.

Jian Rong said, "The Rong made from *cao-er*[1]."

Jian Rong didn't know how to introduce himself. Even when he first started streaming, his introduction was a very simple "*I play mid, my name is just the streamer ID*".

Fortunately, he was just a probationary member right now, so he didn't need to say all that much.

Ding-*ge* stood up. "Let's go. I've already prepared a room for you, I'll take you there first so you can put down your luggage."

After the two of them left, the atmosphere in the living room eased a tiny bit.

"*Cao-er* Rong… the Rong from fuzzy[2]?" Xiao Bai wrinkled his face disdainfully. "This kind of big troll, why is his name so soft and fluffy?"

Pine didn't even bother looking up. "Then your name suits you quite well, both pale and chubby[3]."

"P-baby, will you die if you go a day without bullying your little support?"

"Don't use 'little' in reference to yourself, and don't call me P-baby."

Yuan Qian grinned as he listened to them banter. He waited for Lu Boyuan to sit down before he said, "I didn't notice before because I didn't know

how old he was, but now that I've seen him in person, I feel like Soft truly is young."

Actually, his age was still okay. There were countless trainees who began playing professionally when they were around fifteen or sixteen years old, including Pine. If the LPL hadn't released an age restriction stating that a player had to be seventeen years old before being allowed to participate in competitions, perhaps even more newcomers would've rushed in.

Lu Boyuan said, "Too thin."

Last time when Jian Rong had knocked into him, he had felt very light, not heavy in the slightest.

Yuan Qian said, "That's true. Logically speaking, he should've earned quite a lot as a streamer, so why is he still so thin?"

Lu Boyuan laughed and said, "Feed him a bit and it'll be fine."

Naturally, the rooms in such a luxurious villa wouldn't be lacking.

Just the bed alone was much bigger than the one Jian Rong had at home.

"Originally, this room was arranged for the substitute, but he was used to living in the second team's dorm, so he didn't move over. That's why this room has been empty up until now. Oh, the second team lives in that little villa right behind us." Ding-*ge* said, "I asked the auntie to tidy up the room. Take a look, is there anything missing that you think you'll need?"

Jian Rong said, "No."

Ding-*ge* nodded. “That’s good. Settle into your room first then, and once you’re ready, I’ll take you to the practice room…”

Thump, a very soft noise.

Jian Rong put his backpack down on the ground. “I’m ready. Let’s go.”

Ding-*ge*: “…”

TTC’s entire second floor was divided into numerous practice rooms, all with different uses. The most spacious room was the practice room for the first team’s members, and there was a fixed distance between each computer so that members playing games or streaming wouldn’t disturb the people next to them.

Ding-*ge* brought him over to an empty desk. “The computer and equipment are all new, you can use them as you wish. If you don’t like the feel of the mouse or keyboard, you can change them out. The team’s been on break recently, so the second team all went home. I thought you might be afraid of living by yourself in the back, so this can be your seat for now.”

Jian Rong made a noise of assent before he looked down and gave a start after seeing his keyboard. “This is?”

His keyboard was one of TTC’s custom models; the letter ‘R’ was on the upper left ‘esc’ key.

Ding-*ge* let out an “oh”. “Road’s custom keyboard, it hasn’t gone on sale yet. Aren’t you a fan of his? So I told them to change your keyboard to this version.”

Jian Rong: "…"

Ding-*ge*'s tone of voice was normal. After all, Road's fans were much too commonplace. Never mind the trainees, there were even quite a few players from big pro teams who were his fans.

Seeing Jian Rong's downcast eyes, Ding-*ge* asked, "You don't like it? You can change this anytime."

"No need." Jian Rong shifted his gaze away from the keyboard. "It's too much work to keep changing it… this one is fine."

—

The tryouts officially began in the afternoon.

The first day consisted of Jian Rong's individual tryouts.

It wasn't easy to schedule practice matches during a break, so the coaches had arranged four teammates and a full opposing team for him. These nine people were all TTC's trainees, including two members from the second team who had gone home.

To prevent them from recognizing Jian Rong, the coach gave him an account with all champions unlocked.

Ding-*ge* and the other coaches gathered in the observation room, each person with a notebook in hand. Two computers were placed before them as well, and all the stats from the game would be directly displayed on the monitors.

Sitting in the back were the members of the first team, who had nothing else to do and came to watch the match.

Once everyone arrived, Ding-*ge* entered spectator mode and projected the interface onto a big screen.

Jian Rong sat in the practice room by himself. He finished adjusting his equipment, and after he pressed the 'ready' button, the game started instantly.

Jian Rong didn't know who the other people in his team were, but they clearly knew each other. They started to discuss team composition in the team voice chat[4], and finally, someone said, "We're missing a tankier champion for engaging. Mid, do you know how to play Galio?"

Jian Rong didn't say anything.

"Mid?" the person tried calling again. "You play Galio and just watch me this round, I'll definitely carry you to victory."

Even though the trainees didn't know what the purpose of this match was, everyone wanted to perform well in front of the coaches, so they all chose champions that were glass cannons but could also show off.

A few seconds later, Jian Rong selected LeBlanc, the Deceiver.

"Bro, what are you doing?" That person was dissatisfied. "How can we fight with all glass cannons? Couldn't you have just picked a big tanky engager champ and gotten carried?"

“How about I choose a wet nurse and specially feed you milk?” Jian Rong asked.

The other side: “…”

“Or I play Janna and escort you all the way back to your hometown with my wind?”

“…”

The top laner’s heart was thumping wildly. He hastily opened a WeChat group and sent: Oh shit! Why do I feel like this person is so fucking familiar?!

The champion that Jian Rong was playing this round was called LeBlanc; she possessed extremely big burst damage and agility. It was quite difficult to play her well, and the requirements for a player’s ability level were very high.

The game started. Jian Rong had just walked to the middle lane when the enemy mid laner, Twisted Fate, flashed a Mastery Emote at him.

Xiao Bai couldn’t help but suck in a breath of air through his teeth.

Yuan Qian said, “What is it?”

“When I watched his livestream before, any mid laner who flashes a Mastery Emote in front of him…” Xiao Bai’s expression was complicated, “never has a good ending.”

Xiao Bai turned out to be tragically prophetic.

Before Twisted Fate could reach level 6, he was solo killed by LeBlanc twice.

The second time, Jian Rong did a tower dive and forcefully killed him. Since the defensive turret's damage was too high, right after Jian Rong killed the enemy, he also lost his life to the tower.

"A loss," Yuan Qian said. "He still has gold on him, yet he just trades with the other side like this?"

At level 6, Twisted Fate received his ult, which allowed him to teleport to any enemy on the map, and he began to wander around and help out his teammates.

Jian Rong was a step too late, only making it over after his teammates died in battle, but he still managed to kill the enemy's support.

Pine: "Went over too late. Even if he exchanged a life, it's still a loss."

The more he watched, the more Xiao Bai's brows furrowed. "How come this person would prefer to gank someone in the jungle rather than participate in a team fight with his teammates? This champion of his is useless in the late game."

Lu Boyuan watched the screen silently, not voicing any opinions.

Jian Rong's playstyle was very obvious.

He simply didn't care about losses at all, nor did he care if his teammates needed help.

He only wanted to make his own equipment and level even stronger; he was already used to winning an entire game all by himself.

Yuan Qian glanced at the time. “Thirty-five minutes in.”

Xiao Bai leaned against his chair, sounded a bit like he was delighting in Jian Rong’s misfortune. “His LeBlanc is about to be unusable, everyone’s equipment is leveled up in the late game. Who can he instakill—goddamn??”

Before Xiao Bai could even finish talking, he saw Jian Rong toss out a blink damage skill[5] towards a certain blind spot, trapping the ADC that just happened to be passing by. With a combo, he instakilled the enemy.

The ADC was still trying to run away all the way up until his death; he evidently hadn’t reacted in time.

“How did he see that?” Xiao Bai’s eyes widened. “Does he have an x-ray cheat?”

“Predicted it.” Lu Boyuan finally spoke and explained, “About ten seconds ago, the ADC passed by one of Soft’s wards[6].”

“Ten seconds ago…” Xiao Bai’s eyes grew even rounder. “Even that can be predicted? Is he—ah?”

Within the span of those few sentences, Jian Rong had slipped into the enemy’s jungle. After camping for a few seconds, he triumphantly killed the enemy top laner, who had come to kill a monster.

Xiao Bai: “He can instakill… this top laner?”

“Can’t do it instantly.” Yuan Qian was amused. “Didn’t he have to use two combos? This blink skill of his is going to outplay the other side to death.”

These two kills successfully roused the opposing side’s hatred.

Five minutes later. Three enemies were pursuing Jian Rong, and Jian Rong led them from the bot lane’s second tower all the way up to the top lane’s Baron Nashor[7].

While he walked, he flashed his Mastery Emote. The other side wanted to give up quite a few times, but their rage flared again whenever they saw his Mastery Emote, and they chased madly after him.

Xiao Bai: “…”

This time, even Pine stiffly hooked the corner of his mouth up. “Beautiful.”

During the last team fight, Jian Rong successfully pulled all of the enemy’s aggro. He instakilled the opposing mid laner and ADC, and he tricked the enemy team into wasting countless ults before gloriously dying in the enemy’s base.

His teammates successfully destroyed the enemy’s Nexus.

The game ended. Soft’s first battle was victorious.

The moment they were sent back to the lobby, the chat instantly exploded —

[You're Soft, right??]

[Fuck are you Soft!!!]

[I've definitely seen this LeBlanc before!!]

[Say something else, this time I'll be able to recognize you for sure!]

The coaches couldn't help but lower their heads and laugh.

This kind of player who could exhibit their own personal style to the max… there really weren't many in the LPL.

After the match finished, Jian Rong shook out his fingers and let out a long breath of air.

Then he typed—

[asdsdfz: Do I continue?]

[Ding-*ge*: For now, no need. You can leave the party.]

[Soft, could you please leave your WeChat]

[I watch your streams often!]

After Jian Rong saw Ding-*ge*'s reply, he unhesitatingly withdrew from the party.

He got up and went to the bathroom. By the time he returned, there were two more people in the practice room.

Xiao Bai was sitting in front of his own computer, but his gaze couldn't help but drift over to the new computer next to him.

Pine asked, "What are you looking at?"

"Looking to see if he's secretly scripting[8]." Xiao Bai wore a serious expression.

Pine lifted an eyebrow noncommittally.

"Tch. He actually did end up coming to our team." Xiao Bai leaned back and adopted a paralyzed salted fish posture[9]. "But you really can't tell that he's so young, and so short too. He's just a little wimpy brat. When he stands next to my *ge*, it's basically like looking at a chick and an eagle."

Thinking of that, he snorted coldly. "If he really ends up passing the tryouts and joining the team, I'll isolate him—unless he starts calling me *ge* and apologizes to me. If not…"

Clatter.

Hearing the noise, Xiao Bai swiveled around in his chair extremely slowly and locked gazes with Jian Rong, who was standing behind him and had just finished washing his face.

Xiao Bai: "."

Jian Rong stared expressionlessly at him for a few seconds, before he suddenly gave a huff of laughter.

Xiao Bai's scalp prickled.

Jian Rong said, “I can apologize.”

Xiao Bai: “It’s fine, it’s fine, no need to be so polite…”

“Apologize for which incident?” Jian Rong thought a bit. “That time during the regular season when you pulled a reverse ult, and I said that your gameplay was super trash?”

Xiao Bai: “…”

Jian Rong: “Or was it that time during the spring season when you couldn’t land a single hook the entire game, and I said that as a blind person playing professionally, your spirit was commendable?”

Xiao Bai: “……”

Jian Rong frowned. “Or was it that time during the quarterfinals knockout stage when you were ganked three times in the jungle, and I said that you were acting like Alice in Wonderland?”

Xiao Bai: “……”

Jian Rong: “Also—”

Xiao Bai thought, *If you insult me one more time, just watch me cry for you.*

“I’ll still grow taller.”

Xiao Bai: “?”

Remembering Xiao Bai’s description just then, Jian Rong felt his face darken. He said, “You’re the one who’s a chicken.”

Xiao Bai was stupefied by Jian Rong's last two lines. Before he could come up with a good counterattack, he saw his *ge* walk into the room.

Xiao Bai was instantly about to snitch, but out of the corner of his eyes he caught a glimpse of the bottle of milk that Lu Boyuan was holding.

Jian Rong turned around, wanting to sit back down in front of his own computer, and came face-to-face with Lu Boyuan, who was wearing his team jacket draped over his shoulders.

Lu Boyuan lowered his gaze and stared at the 'R' on his keyboard. "Ding-*ge* changed it out for you?"

Jian Rong was startled, and he instantly went quiet. "… en."

"It has my name on the back," Lu Boyuan said. "If you don't like it, tell him to change it."

Jian Rong had just finished washing his face, so there was still water dripping from his chin. He reached up and rubbed it away before saying, "It's fine, I can play with anything."

Lu Boyuan hummed and put the milk on his table.

"There's more in the kitchen." Lu Boyuan said, "Drink a bit more, grow a bit faster."

Xiao Bai thought, *It's over*.

His *ge* had also stepped on a landmine.

Xiao Bai was about to sacrifice himself to save Lu Boyuan, but then he saw that the teenager who had just called him a chicken was currently sporting flaming red ears—pretty much the same way he had looked last time at the Worlds' stadium.

Before Xiao Bai could recover, he heard Soft let out a very faint "oh".

Then, he stiffly sat down, stiffly stuck in the straw, and stiffly started to drink the milk that the captain gave him.

Xiao Bai: "..."

He sat up straight.

And decided that he would also give Soft milk next time.

Translation Notes

1. *Same explanation here as for his WeChat ID. 茸 (Rong) can be broken up into 艹(草) (cao) and 耳 (er), which literally means grass ear, but that sounds dumb so I just left it as pinyin* ^
2. *毛茸茸 (mao rong rong) = fuzzy. Think like a little white fluff ball dog. Max floof!* ^
3. *The Bai in Xiao Bai means white. Pine calls him pale (white)* ^
4. *LoL actually doesn't have a team voice chat option (only party voice chat), so not sure if the author is just going with their own interpretation of this or if they're referring to some external voice chat?* ^

5. *If anyone's curious, they can check out LeBlanc's skills here to better visualize what's going on. I'm pretty sure the skill JR is using is Distortion (but let me know if it's not hahah)* ^
6. *Placing wards around the map strategically can notify you of the enemies' whereabouts* ^
7. *Baron Nashor is one of the most powerful neutral monsters in the game; killing it gives a big buff. The raws refer to this as 'dragon pit' but the dragon pit is another monster that's closer to the bot lane, so through research I concluded that the terms are just used differently in English vs Chinese. Again, if I'm wrong, please correct me!* ^
8. *Scripting is just like bots, hacks, cheats. Basically using a software to play for you* ^
9. ^

Wei: The return of the translation notes :') Also wow Jian Rong is such a savage, poor Xiao Bai

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 16: Little teacup pig.

By the time Jian Rong finished drinking all the milk, Ding-*ge* just happened to push open the practice room door.

“I made a reservation at the restaurant. Let’s get ready, the car is already waiting outside.” Ding-*ge* saw that Jian Rong had just entered a new game, and he frowned. “Oh no, I forgot to tell you ahead of time…”

Jian Rong bought some equipment and left the base. When he heard that, he shook his head. “It’s fine, I can eat whatever, you don’t need to worry about me.”

“How can that be? I can tell the driver to wait a little, play quickly,” Ding-*ge* said.

“It’s really fine.” Jian Rong paused and said, “I want to finish playing my promotion series.”

At that, Ding-*ge* could only drop the subject. “Alright. In that case, I’ll send you the base’s address, and you can order takeout for yourself. I’ll reimburse the money. Or there’s also food in the fridge, you can eat anything you want.”

Jian Rong said, “Okay.”

“I won’t be going either.” Lu Boyuan stood up. “Didn’t get enough sleep, so I’m going to go up and take a nap. You guys go ahead.”

Ding-*ge*: “Do you want us to get something to-go for you?”

Lu Boyuan went straight upstairs, only tossing behind a: “No need.”

Ding-*ge* gave a few more instructions before leaving.

After everyone left the practice room, Jian Rong let out a long breath.

He was already used to living by himself, so he wasn’t quite used to playing games together with other people in a practice room yet.

This ranked game finished in less than twenty minutes. “Victory” had just flashed on the screen when the phone that Jian Rong had placed next to his keyboard chimed twice.

A new group chat appeared in his WeChat.

The name of the group chat was [TTC’s Fierce Men Workout Club], and there were only six people in it.

[Ding-*ge*: The base’s address is…]

[Ding-*ge*: If you need anything these next few days, just give me a call or say something in the chat. I can see it.]

Jian Rong was slightly startled.

Was this… TTC’s internal group chat?

Could probationary members also be added to the internal group chat?

[Ding-*ge*: It’s just a group chat for living together, no pressure. Feel free to let me know if you need anything.]

[R-ong: …okay.]

During the second promotion series game, Jian Rong played absent-mindedly.

The battle concluded after thirty-five minutes, and the words “Promotion Successful” jumped out. He clicked ‘OK’ and immediately closed the game.

Jian Rong returned to his room. He stared blankly at the ceiling for two minutes, but in the end he still couldn’t resist pulling out his phone from his pocket.

Opened the group chat.

Clicked on the members list.

The person with the WeChat ID “R” was quietly lying at the very bottom of the list. The profile picture was of a little teacup pig.

Only Lu Boyuan’s friends could see his Moments, so all Jian Rong could access when he clicked on his profile was an extremely bland personal message. He looked at it for a few moments and unexpectedly recalled Shiliu’s “*big perverts who would follow you home*” line.

Jian Rong was silent for a long time, before he picked up his clothes and walked into the bathroom.

He fumbled around in the bathroom for some time, but the only thing that came out was cold water. Jian Rong took off his clothes and was about to

just wash using cold water when he heard the sound of knocking come from outside his door.

Remembering that there were only two people in the base right now, Jian Rong froze, before he snatched up the clothes next to him and randomly threw them on himself.

"Ding-*ge* said that you weren't answering his messages…" Lu Boyuan looked up when he heard the door open. He paused briefly before he finished what he was saying originally. "And told me to come over to see what's up."

Jian Rong's hair was extremely messy since he had dressed in too much of a hurry. He gripped the handle of the door and blinked before letting out an "oh". "I'll check right now."

"En." Lu Boyuan felt like something was a little off about the person in front of him, and he lowered his eyes and assessed him for a few seconds before suddenly raising an eyebrow. "Your shirt is backwards."

Jian Rong looked down and was met with the sight of his shirt label.

"…I was taking a shower." After he said that, he then felt like it was too weird to put on his clothes and come out to open the door in the middle of a shower. Jian Rong forced himself to add, "But, there doesn't seem to be any hot water."

Lu Boyuan said, "Let me take a look."

Jian Rong was about to refuse, but Lu Boyuan had already entered.

The bathroom floor was a little wet. Lu Boyuan glanced at it and said, “Come here.”

The bathroom was very small. Jian Rong scooted forward a tiny bit.

Lu Boyuan looked back and saw that Jian Rong was still standing far away, and he smiled before slanting his body to the side so that Jian Rong could see where he was pressing. “These two buttons below, pressing the left one gives cold water, the right one gives hot water. If you turn them, you can adjust the temperature.”

Jian Rong looked at the buttons that he had tugged at for a long time earlier to no avail. “…got it.”

Lu Boyuan nodded. “Go ahead and shower.”

Lu Boyuan was about to walk out of the bathroom when the phone that Jian Rong had placed on the counter suddenly rang. “Ding-*ge*” was written across the top of the screen.

Lu Boyuan picked up the phone in passing, wanting to hand it to Jian Rong, but he accidentally pressed the lock screen button and hung up the call.

After the incoming call notification disappeared, the screen returned to the page that the owner was originally looking at.

It was a WeChat profile. Lu Boyuan swept a glance over it and saw the little teacup pig that his family was raising.

Jian Rong froze in his movement to take the phone and was also dumbfounded.

Jian Rong: "…"

Lu Boyuan said, "I accidentally pressed the wrong thing and hung up the call."

Jian Rong said faintly, "It's fine."

"You should shower after you call him back." Lu Boyuan placed the phone in Jian Rong's extended hand. "He probably wants to bring back food for you."

Jian Rong instantly locked the screen and wished he could throw his phone into the toilet and flush it away. "…okay."

He summoned up the courage to send Lu Boyuan out of his room.

After he called Ding-*ge* back, Jian Rong returned to the bathroom to shower.

Jian Rong's mind was full of Lu Boyuan's expression just then when he saw his phone; Lu Boyuan was wearing a small smile, but he hadn't exposed Jian Rong.

He stuck his head under the stream of water and let it douse him for a while. Finally, he leaned forward and knocked his forehead foolishly against the wall once. He couldn't help but curse "*dumbass*" at himself inside.

Jian Rong walked out, rubbing at his hair with a towel, and saw that there was a WeChat notification on his phone.

At that moment, he felt a little opposed to that crappy app, so he messed around for a long time before clicking on it—

[R has requested to add you as a friend. Attached message: None]

Jian Rong stopped rubbing his hair.

He stared at that little teacup pig for a long while, all the way until someone knocked on his door again. Flustered, he only then did he press 'accept'.

Jian Rong slipped his phone into his pocket and jumped off the bed to open the door. Before he did so, he didn't forget to force his chaotically damp hair to lie down flat.

Once the door opened, Xiao Bai put on an amiable smile. "Ding-*ge* got some snacks to go and told me to bring it up for you."

The youth's hair was wet, and when he saw Xiao Bai, he obviously looked a little disappointed. His eyelids drooped down listlessly.

Jian Rong was silent for a few beats, before he rejected him coolly. "I don't want it, thank you."

"Don't be like that." Xiao Bai put to use what he just learned. "Eat a bit more! Grow a bit faster!"

Jian Rong: "?"

Seeing that Jian Rong remained unmoved, Xiao Bai fished out his trump card from his pocket.

“I even brought up a bottle of milk for you.” Xiao Bai said kindly, “If you drink it once you wake up tomorrow, you’ll definitely grow nice and tall.”

“……” Jian Rong stared at the milk for a long time.

Then, he lifted his head and asked him, very sincerely, “Do you want to fight?”

—

The next day, Xiao Bai trapped Pine and complained to him about his hardships for quite a while.

“Didn’t we both give him milk? The one I gave was even Milk Deluxe, it’s way more expensive than the other Mengniu[1] milk!”

Pine had listened to him prattle away for an entire game, and he was at his wit’s end. He reminded Xiao Bai, “He’s Lu-*ge*’s fan.”

“I know that ah.” Xiao Bai said, “But isn’t the difference still way too extreme? He’ll drink the milk that his idol gives him all in one breath, but if I give him milk, he wants to fight me??”

Pine thought for a bit. “He’s probably your anti-fan then.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

Seeing Jian Rong come back from the restroom, Xiao Bai immediately zipped his mouth tightly shut.

While waiting for the game to update, Jian Rong secretly snuck a glance at Lu Boyuan's spot.

Lu Boyuan was going to stream today. He was sitting with his arms crossed, waiting for the staff member to help him adjust the equipment.

It seemed like he had just woken up, as he hadn't really said anything the entire time. Whenever the staff member asked something, he only nodded or shook his head in response.

The door to the practice room was pushed open, and Jian Rong hastily whipped his head back around.

Ding-*ge* walked in hurriedly, and the moment he entered, he spoke seriously. "Don't play on the Korean server from now on, everyone return to the national server and climb there."

Even though the LPL was currently the number one competitive region, the domestic game environment was still very bad. The high ranks had many booster and deadweight[2] players, and there were countless more "game actors"[3]. It had already turned into that sort of awful atmosphere, so the majority of professional players would still choose to train on the Korean server.

It reached the point where, for some clubs, one of the requirements for choosing trainees was a ranking on the Korean server above Master tier.

Xiao Bai said, puzzled, “What’s wrong?”

Ding-*ge* said, “The spring season rules were announced.”

Yuan Qian asked, “Players aren’t allowed to play ranked on the Korean server anymore?”

“No, but it’s basically the same.” Ding-*ge* let out a long sigh. “The LPL is requiring that… every professional player’s peak rank must be maintained, either through solo or duo queue, at Diamond 1 or above.”

Everyone in TTC: “……”

In reality, this wasn’t a tall order for professional players. Many average to good players could charge up to Diamond 1 with a burst of effort.

But, as everyone knew, most of TTC’s members didn’t really have a good affinity with ranked games.

The least worrisome person in the team was Yuan Qian. He was diligent when climbing, and he never fooled around with champions that he wasn’t good at; his rank was always hovering between the Master and Challenger tiers.

Pine liked to play neglected ADs, and he liked to taunt people in a deliberately ambiguous manner even more. He had once taken out an AD Lulu in a Diamond 1 game and successfully pissed off his other four teammates completely. His current rank was Diamond 3.

When solo queueing, Xiao Bai basically never played support. He wasn't good enough to carry girls, yet he liked to duo queue with them, so his rank always roamed around, leaping back and forth between Diamond and Platinum.

Lu Boyuan's rank had been frozen and was consistently dropping points from inactivity decay. It was about to hit Platinum.

Xiao Bai's expression was heavy. "We're going to lose our qualification to enter the competition."

"It's not that serious." Ding-*ge* patted his head and comforted, "During the upcoming period, you guys should duo queue as much as possible. Don't look for trouble, and it'll be fairly easy."

After Ding-*ge* said that, he asked Jian Rong, "Your rank should be at least Diamond 1, right? The requirements for joining as a new player will also be upgraded to Diamond 1."

Jian Rong said, "Diamond 4, 0 LP."

Ding-*ge*: "..."

But Jian Rong was calm. "It's fine, climbing up there is really easy."

TTC's bot lane duo couldn't help but shoot him envious looks.

Even though Jian Rong sounded arrogant, it was the truth. In the current version of the game, it was easiest for mid laners and junglers to climb, especially a carry-type mid laner like Jian Rong.

Ding-*ge* nodded, satisfied, before walking over to Lu Boyuan.

Ding-*ge* lowered his voice. “Don’t play if your hand is uncomfortable. I can let the officials know, making up the stream time later is fine too.”

“It’s not that bad…” Lu Boyuan couldn’t help but laugh. “I can play.”

Ding-*ge* was still hesitant. “In any case, don’t force yourself.”

Jian Rong’s game finally finished updating, and he opened the game client. He was about to log into his main account when—

“Jian Rong.”

Jian Rong was startled by the call, and he only slowly turned his head around a few seconds later. “Ah.”

Lu Boyuan pulled up the streaming website, and he asked him, “Queue for a while?”

Jian Rong first nodded subconsciously, but then he remembered something. “…aren’t you about to stream?”

He had previously discussed it with Ding-*ge*. Before the probationary period was over, he wouldn’t divulge the fact that he was at TTC to anyone else.

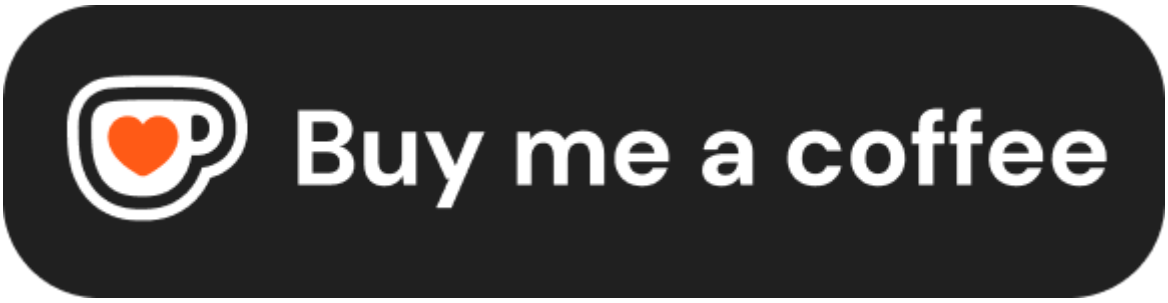
“Won’t affect it.” Lu Boyuan said, “As long as you don’t talk and don’t let them know that you’re here next to me, it’ll be fine. Coming?”

Translation Notes

1. *Mengniu is a Chinese dairy company, and the Milk Deluxe is one of their milk products (supposed to be top tier milk I guess)* ^
2. *Boosters are people who get paid to level up other people's accounts. Deadweight players are basically the people who always get carried? Like they don't really know how to play very well and always do stupid things in the game on accident, but not purposefully* ^
3. *Trolls, not like JR's "trolling" but actual trolls who purposefully let themselves die and otherwise mess up the game* ^

Yan: Road's quiet indulgence of Soft begins >///< also lmao I laughed when Jian Rong wanted to fight Xiao Bai over the milk, two babies. Also the forced switching over to Chinese server thing is something that really happened this year to LPL, a link here if anyone's curious!

Wei: Haha the entire TTC team makes me laugh, I love their dynamic



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ICDI Chapter 17: Son, don’t be a bootlicker again in the next life, okay?

Bonus Ko-fi chapter 3/6! Also thanks to Anonymous for the Ko-fi~

Jian Rong had duo queued with Lu Boyuan before, so it was fine even if he played with him on his main account, as long as he didn’t reveal the fact that he was at TTC’s base.

Lu Boyuan invited him to party and asked, “Do you want to let your fans know? When your livestream was suddenly stopped before, quite a few people came to ask about it on my Weibo.”

Jian Rong instantly remembered that top comment he had seen before.

At that time, he had reported the comment using two different accounts, but up until now he still hadn’t managed to successfully get that comment taken down.

But, did Road also look at Weibo comments?

Didn’t they say that these professional players didn’t really go to their own comment sections and discussion forums to seek out abuse??

“No need. It’s been so long since I last streamed, they should’ve all moved on to other people’s streams.” Jian Rong swiftly chose the roles that he wanted to play, wanting to quickly move on from this topic. “I’m ready.”

Lu Boyuan gave an “en” and started the livestream before entering matchmaking.

Their in-game voice chat was on, so Jian Rong turned off his mic.

Upon entering the game, Jian Rong saw that he was fourth to choose.

He had just finished banning when he heard Lu Boyuan say, “Your fans are all AFKing here in my livestream room.”

There was a trace of laughter in his voice, and it sounded like he didn’t actually mind it.

Usually, Jian Rong always wore his headphones crookedly; he didn’t like to wear them properly, disliking the stuffy feeling.

He tugged his headphones up a bit, thoroughly concealing his burning ears.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: I don’t have any fans, even if I do they’re all anti-fans.]

After sending that line, Jian Rong still couldn’t resist pulling up StarTV’s website. He created a new side account in half a minute, and he saw Lu Boyuan’s livestream the moment he entered the recommendation page.

Normally, Lu Boyuan was too lazy to come up with a stream name, so it was always the system’s default “TTC · Road’s Livestream Room”.

But today—

[TTC · Road: Duo Q, with Soft.]

Jian Rong: "…"

His heart thumped wildly, and he stared blankly at it for a few seconds before clicking on it.

The club's equipment was much better than his outdated computer at home. Even as the barrage flew across like an army ten thousand strong, his interface performed as crisply and smoothly as before, no lag whatsoever.

[??? Why are these two people duo Q'ing together again?]

[Damn, this unfilial son. In order to help him hold on to Road, Dad camped out in God Lu's livestream room every day, specifically targeting that crowd of girlfriend fans. And then he calls Dad an anti-fan??]

[Who is Soft ah. Where did all these people called "Soft's Dear Dad[1]", "Soft's Ancestor" come from? Tieba? Why do they speak so unpleasantly? Can the room mod do something?]

[Little swallow, dressed cheerfully, coming here every spring. You ask the swallow why it comes, the swallow says, mind your own business[2].]

[The swallow says, never you mind where your dad comes from.]

[The little dumbass definitely created a new side account and is spying on us in Road's livestream. Let me dig him out.]

Who the hell is spying on you all!

Jian Rong's side account was originally called "Jian Er[3]". After he saw that comment, he silently opened his profile and randomly changed the ID to a string of nonsense characters.

After switching back to the game, he saw that Road had picked Rengar.

Rengar, also known as "Lion Dog," could cause explosive damage by staying in the brush; it was equally reliant on snowballing. As players put it, Rengar was "a lion during a tailwind, a dog during a headwind." Whenever this champion killed someone, the enemy mid laner and ADC would feel their hearts tremble.

Because this champion couldn't engage or run away easily, he rarely made an appearance in competitions.

[Really playing Lion Dog!!!]

[I'm not exaggerating, this is the first time I've seen a pro player pick Lion Dog this year. I even thought that this champ was about to be removed.]

[Road actually also knows how to play this kind of brainless champion?]

Lu Boyuan finished adjusting his runes and said lazily, "It's been a long time."

Usually, Lu Boyuan didn't talk a lot, and it was the same when he was streaming. If he was in a good mood, he would answer a few comments in the barrage that he happened to see; if he was in a bad mood, he might not say a single word during an entire game.

But that didn't affect his livestream's popularity at all. After only streaming for a few minutes, he effortlessly shot up to the top of the popularity ranking.

It was Jian Rong's turn to pick a champion. Since it was still his probationary period, he subconsciously treated this ranked game as a part of the tryouts.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: What should I play?]

A sea of question marks floated across the barrage.

[Soft can't be the one on his account right??]

[You need me to teach you how to play this game?]

[You need me to teach you how to play this game?]

"Anything works." Lu Boyuan glanced at the barrage and saw what they were spamming. "What does *'you need me to teach you how to play this game'* mean."

Jian Rong: "…"

A few months ago, an unthinking accompanying player platform had sought Jian Rong out for an advertisement.

For the publicity, the platform had arranged for a girl to duo queue with Jian Rong. The girl's voice was sweet and tender, and she was good at acting spoiled; she could coax her boss until they obeyed her every word.

She had hesitated on the champion pick phase for a few dozen seconds before she had asked, "*Gege*, what champion should I play?"

At the time, Jian Rong had been eating noodles, and he had frowned, puzzled, when he heard that. He had blurted out— "You need me to teach you how to play this game?"

Jian Rong locked in LeBlanc, the Deceiver, and was about to say *"I don't know"* when he saw that crowd of "Soft Ancestors," bearing his livestream room's icon, flood the barrage with the entire sequence of events in a few short seconds.

Lu Boyuan chuckled ambiguously. "So it's like that…"

He heard the person sitting behind him type furiously away on his keyboard.

After typing unceasingly for half a minute—

[Just Watch My Gameplay: No need to gank mid during early game.]

Lu Boyuan said, "I'll come after level 6."

[Who's that typing behind God Lu? APM so fast.]

[The ID of the enemy mid laner is a little familiar?]

[Oh damn God Lu and Kongkong crashed cars!!]

Lu Boyuan hadn't paid attention to the other side's IDs when loading into the game, and he had just finished killing a monster when someone from

the other team spoke in the all chat.

[[All] Empty Without You[4]: *Ge*, are you solo Q? Want to team up after this game ends? Let's climb together QAQ]

Kongkong, MFG's mid laner, was just under twenty years old and was one of the LPL's fairly popular new mid laners in the past few years. He had pulled off quite a few outstanding performances in his recent competitions, successfully attracting much attention from the fans.

[[All] Road: Double Q]

Kongkong looked at the enemy's IDs and, after confirming that no TTC members were present, he asked doubtfully: [With who?]

[[All] Road: Our mid laner]

Jian Rong hadn't expected Road to use *"our mid laner"* as his introduction.

It was definitely just something typed without much thought, with no extra meaning to it.

As he thought that, he lowered his eyes and read that line one more time.

[[All] Kongkong[5]: This mid's ID is a bit familiar ah.]

Half a minute later, Kongkong finally recalled who the other person was.

[[All] Kongkong: *Ge*……. blink twice if you've been kidnapped.]

Right after Kongkong sent that message, the enemy mid laner's LeBlanc suddenly used W to dash forward and land a combo on him. He quickly

retreated and consumed a health potion to recover; he was about to say something else when that person spoke first—

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: ?]

Amidst Kongkong's confusion, Soft's anti-fan army dropped out of the sky.

[Allow me to translate the meaning of my son's question mark: Shut up dumbass.]

[A little clearer: You talking about your mom?]

"…eh, I'm going to play properly, so I won't interact with the barrage for now." Kongkong coughed lightly. "I definitely have to win God Lu's points this game."

Kongkong felt a bit gloomy after being attacked by the other person's fans for no reason whatsoever, and he secretly wanted to recover some face from the enemy mid laner.

He had heard things about this streamer before, and their team's jungler had once praised this person. But no matter what his level of strength was, it could only be at a streamer's level. If he was really all that powerful, he definitely would've been scooped up by some professional club a long time ago.

In addition, he was currently playing Lissandra, who had CC, self-defense abilities, and was very good at restraining assassin-type champions like LeBlanc. The teammates that he had matched with this game also had

decent win rates, and their team composition was pretty good, so if he played seriously it should be fairly easy to win.

But that thought of his was annihilated in less than fifteen minutes.

After the third time his team's jungler was jointly stealth-killed by LeBlanc and Lion Dog, the jungler finally couldn't take it anymore and started to swear out loud.

"Didn't their mid laner just go back to base?" Kongkong frowned. "When did he invade our jungle?"

Once that happened a few times, Kongkong no longer sat around and waited for death. With his support, he slipped into the underbrush next to the enemy's raptor camp, wanting to stealth-kill LeBlanc.

Not long after, Soft leisurely entered the jungle. Kongkong immediately used his E skill to teleport to Soft while simultaneously tossing out his ult, wanting to stun him.

Unexpectedly, the moment that his ice was about to freeze on the enemy's body, Soft instantly used his Stopwatch[6]. After the 2.5 second period passed, he turned around and instakilled the glass cannon support next to Kongkong, so fast that Kongkong didn't even have time to react.

Lastly, Lu Boyuan promptly arrived and coordinated with Soft to take Kongkong's head.

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: ?]

[Allow me to translate the meaning of my son's question mark: Just who are you trying to stealth-kill here?]

[A little clearer: Does someone like you even deserve to enter my family's jungle?]

Kongkong: "…"

Can you crowd of Soft fans quickly leave.

When the game ended, Kongkong's score was 3/7/9, and he was the team's SVP[7].

Their ADC was even more tragic. Because of God Lu and Soft, he ended up with a 1/13/2 score, and he had already gone into seclusion on the spot.

Lu Boyuan returned to the lobby and was about to re-enter matchmaking, when he saw that Kongkong had joined his livestream at some unknown point in time and had sent him gifts too.

Lu Boyuan almost never expressed thanks for gifts—he received way too many of them, so he would never finish thanking people if he did.

When he saw the familiar ID, Lu Boyuan said mildly, "Thank you for the gift. Don't send any more, waste of money."

[MFG-Kongkong: *Ge* QAQ I lost 16 points]

Lu Boyuan didn't respond. His eyes were lowered as he read a few comments that floated across the bottom of the screen—

[You start reciting a thank you speech just because Kongkong sent two Sea of Stars? Then what about those dozen or so Sea of Stars my son sent before??]

[My poor, lowly son. Can't bear to switch out a computer that he's been using for several years already, yet after smashing out the gift money that he diligently and frugally scraped together, he can't even hear a single echo in return.]

[My heart hurts for that little dumbass.]

[Son, don't be a bootlicker again in the next life, okay?]

After the game still didn't start, Jian Rong saw those comments, and he pressed his head against his arms, his face burning fiercely.

In the future, he was definitely going to hold a fan meet and greet.

Go carrying a knife.

Slaughter as many as he could.

"Thank you, Soft, for the eleven Sea of Stars."

The man's low and deep voice interrupted the swearing in Jian Rong's mind.

"I didn't look too closely before," Lu Boyuan laughed, "I wasn't ignoring it deliberately, don't hold it against me."

Clang.

The spectators all heard the sound of a heavy object falling to the ground. Following close after, a cup slowly rolled out behind Lu Boyuan.

Ten seconds later, a slender arm appeared in the background of the video.

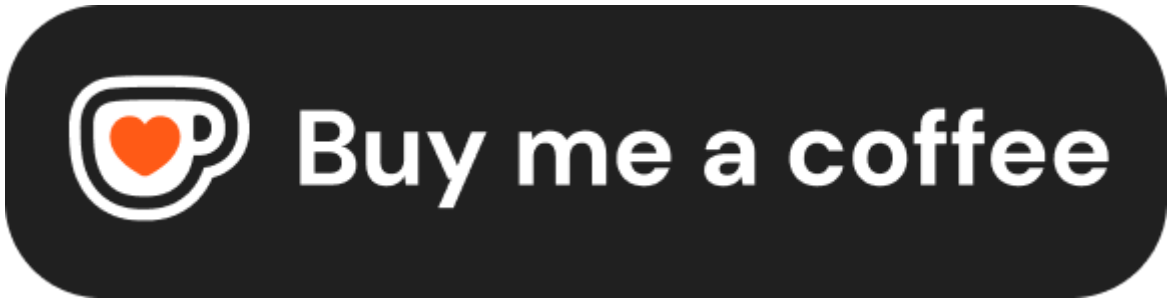
Jian Rong was afraid of entering the shot, so he strenuously covered his face and flailed his arm around energetically before finally managing to snatch his water cup back.

Translation Notes

1. *Besides 'Dear Dad' there isn't really a good English translation for this that I could think of. Literally in Chinese it's 亲爹 (qin die) which is supposed to mean 'blood-related father', as in they're saying they're Soft's actual dad, but it sounds really odd any way you translate it. Qin also means 'dear', though, so I just left it at that* ^
2. *I cannot do this line justice in English but I promise you it is so funny in Chinese. The original base is a children's song called Little Swallow, but the fan alters the ending of the rhyme into a very abrupt "GTFO" kind of thing. The original line: 小燕子，穿花衣，年年春天来这里，你问燕子为啥来，燕子说，管好你自己。* ^
3. *Rong 茸 without the 艹 becomes 耳 (er). He uses a different character for Jian too (简 became 间) but same pronunciation (different tone)* ^
4. *Play on words with Kongkong's name, the 'kong' can mean 'empty'* ^
5. *I also don't know why Kongkong's ID suddenly changed to this LOL* ^
6. *LoL equipment: renders the user invulnerable to all damage for 2.5 seconds; the user is also unable to move or use spells/abilities during the period* ^

7. *MVP of the losing team* ^

Wei: Soft's fans are truly the MVPs of this novel HAHA



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ICDI Chapter 18: Good boy.

Bonus Ko-fi chapter 4/6! Thanks to another Anonymous for the Ko-fi!

Lu Boyuan could see that arm floundering behind him from his own video window. Afraid of being recognized, Jian Rong had also temporarily slipped a hat on his head.

Altogether, Jian Rong was fairly thorough, but…

[Ahhh God Lu why is there a woman at your base!!]

[Is that a woman? How come I feel like they're dressed like a guy?]

[What guy's arm is that skinny?]

[The little dumbass' arm is as skinny as his]

[?? Now that you say it, that does seem to be the case hah]

[The brim of the hat that's exposed… is that from TTC's merch? Soft also seems to have a hat like that, he wore it at the stadium]

[Ah? You mean the person behind Road is my son?]

[He ran away too quickly, couldn't tell if Road's signature was on it or not…]

[You dumbass straight guys have quite some ideas. How could it possibly be Soft, he would've been killed and silenced by Xiao Bai and Pine the moment he entered TTC's base… no, to put it more precisely, no matter

which club's base he appears at, the probability that he can walk out alive isn't very high.]

[nsdd[1]]

[Very hard not to agree]

[Kan likes your comment 100 million times]

Lu Boyuan allowed them to guess and then deny it as they pleased. He closed the barrage helper and didn't interact with the audience anymore.

At MFG.

Kongkong was sitting in his gaming chair, watching the stream, when someone suddenly struck the back of his head with a pencil. It was their team's coach. "Instead of climbing properly, you're here watching a stream? What about your own livestream room? Wake up a little, you're the only one in the team who isn't at Diamond 1 yet. Even TTC's members are working hard, what qualifications do you have to slack off?"

Kongkong didn't move an inch. "I'll just watch a few games, pilfer some techniques."

"The other side's a jungler, what techniques could you possibly pilfer as a mid laner? What's more, if his playstyle was that easy to learn, all those Korean junglers in the other teams could just go straight home."

After the coach said that, he casually swept a glance over the screen and happened to see a team fight take place.

Road's champion, Camille, was as fierce as ever, and was currently coordinating with his team's mid laner, Katarina, to carry out a brilliant and exciting… 2v5.

The coach stared blankly as the five people on the other team surrounded them, but Road didn't reveal any intention to retreat. He used his E skill to dash over to the enemy's ADC and swiftly unleashed a combo, killing the ADC.

Katarina unhesitatingly entered the scene. Her positioning was abnormally agile, and combined with Katarina's unique blink skill, she was actually able to dodge countless spells amidst the crowd of champions while also dealing an astonishing amount of AOE damage. Finally, she found the perfect position to release her ult—

Quadra Kill!

Seeing that the barrage was full of comments like "*this duo Q combination is undefeatable*," the coach frowned and asked, "Who is this?"

Kongkong: "God Lu ah."

"I'm talking about the mid laner." The coach asked, "TTC's new mid laner?"

Kongkong was startled. "TTC is recruiting a new mid laner?"

"You don't say. With Kan in such bad shape, the most he can be in the future is a substitute. Their current sub also isn't quite good enough, so they definitely have to look for someone new." The coach shot a look at the

mid laner's ID, but it was unfamiliar. He said, "Seems to be a newcomer, probably still in the probationary phase."

Kongkong let out a half-understanding "oh" before he said, "No, they're just duo queueing. This definitely isn't their new mid laner."

At his confident tone of voice, the coach said doubtfully, "Why?"

"The mid laner is playing on his main account, so you probably can't recognize him." Kongkong said, "It's Soft."

The coach: "…"

Kongkong smiled. "That Soft with the dyed blue hair, who once said that our team fights looked like we were trying to act out *Calabash Brothers*[2]."

The coach was silent for a moment, before he nodded. "…in that case, probably not."

Never mind everything else, this brat had offended so many people; if he really was recruited into the team, then wouldn't every one of TTC's competitions from here on out become a battleground for vengeance?

—

Jian Rong trained alone for a week.

The coaches switched out many different opponents for him, and he played many 5v5s. Jian Rong also played 1v1 games, and was busy to the point that he started dreaming about custom game modes.

One weekend afternoon, after Jian Rong won another 1v1, Ding-*ge* gave him a contract.

"It's just a draft. You can look over it and let me know if you have any requests," Ding-*ge* said.

Jian Rong nodded and asked, "I passed?"

"There's still one week left in the probationary period," Ding-*ge* said noncommittally. "Keep it up."

As Jian Rong walked out with the contract, he ran into Lu Boyuan, who was about to enter the meeting room.

Lu Boyuan glanced at what Jian Rong was holding and didn't seem surprised. "Congrats."

"Thank you." Jian Rong paused. "It's only a draft, not the official contract yet."

Lu Boyuan gave an "en." "Look over the contract carefully, don't be cheated."

As if the one handing out the contract wasn't his own team.

Jian Rong: "It shouldn't… be that bad."

Lu Boyuan was going to say something else, but the door to the meeting room opened then. Ding-*ge* beckoned at Lu Boyuan while calling someone on the phone, indicating for him to hurry and enter.

Just when Jian Rong was about to step to the side, Lu Boyuan had already inclined his body and brushed past him, and the two of them momentarily bumped into each other.

He heard Lu Boyuan say, “Go ahead and train.”

As a result, Jian Rong practiced all the way from the afternoon to ten at night, only stopping for ten minutes in the middle to eat a bowl of noodles.

When Xiao Bai returned from eating a midnight snack, he just happened to see Jian Rong finish a game. The screen dimmed for a few seconds before a notification window popped up, announcing his promotion to Diamond 2.

While Jian Rong entered the next match, Xiao Bai eventually couldn’t help but sigh softly. “How does he have so much energy? Doing tryouts from morning to afternoon, then playing ranked from afternoon to night, working so diligently every single day… it makes me seem super lazy in comparison.”

Pine lowered his head and took a sip of his drink. “You are super lazy.”

“Shh! Lower your voice!” Xiao Bai retorted, “How am I lazy? I also played ranked for two hours today, okay!”

“Mn, I saw. You failed your Diamond 4 promotion series again.” Pine said, “You might as well slack off instead.”

“……”

Xiao Bai was so mad that his hair was nearly bristling. He was about to snatch Pine's drink when he heard a series of hasty footsteps; Yuan Qian walked into the practice room, looking agitated.

The volume in Jian Rong's headphones was extremely low, and he also subconsciously shot a look at the door when he heard the noise.

"He's back," Yuan Qian tossed out abruptly.

Xiao Bai asked, "Who?"

Yuan Qian said, "Kan."

Xiao Bai was startled. Pine looked up from his phone, and the practice room was so quiet that the only sound left came from Jian Rong clicking his mouse.

"I saw him get out of the car." Yuan Qian looked at the ground. "He got a lot skinnier. Ding-*ge* called him into the meeting room the moment he entered."

Now, nobody was in the mood to practice anymore.

Originally, Xiao Bai had already pulled up the game client, but he directly turned off his entire computer after hearing that. He dragged Pine over to the living room closest to the meeting room, wanting to monitor each and every possible movement. Yuan Qian also took a leave of absence from that night's stream and followed them to the living room.

Only Jian Rong was left in the practice room.

Another game finished, and Shiliu asked in voice chat, “You’re going to get off now, right?”

Jian Rong entered the lobby again and turned on his mic. “Not anymore, let’s continue.”

“Didn’t you say that you were tired?” Shiliu paused. “What’s up with you lately, trying to gain points so fiercely?”

“No reason.” Jian Rong said, “It’s too easy to win in this tier, so it’s boring playing in it.”

Shiliu: “…”

Didn’t you get by very happily before in Gold while bullying noobs??

Jian Rong played all the way until two in the morning.

The practice room door wasn’t shut, so he heard the sound of the meeting room door opening, he heard Ding-*ge* urging them to sleep, he heard the other people going upstairs and returning to their rooms.

He only said goodbye to Shiliu, got off, and went back to his room after the lights in the living room went out.

The heater was set quite high in the base. After playing LoL for the entire day and then taking a hot shower, Jian Rong felt like his mind was murky after coming out of the bathroom; even the air felt hot and stuffy.

He laid on his bed for a while before he decided to go to the balcony outside and get some air.

The balcony's curtains and floor-to-ceiling windows both weren't shut completely, and the curtains billowed in the wind.

A faint hint of smoke slipped into Jian Rong's nose.

"I'm sorry, Captain." The man's voice sounded faintly choked up. "I'm sorry."

Jian Rong was about to pull aside the curtains, but he froze upon hearing the voice coming from the balcony.

He had heard this voice in post-competition interviews before; it was Kan's.

Kan lowered his head and wiped at his face heavily with his hands. After a very long silence, he finally continued, "I really only did it one time…

"Only that time during the semifinals. I came to an agreement with them, that it would just be two rounds… one of the rounds was a small wager about whether there would be a lot of kills or not, it definitely wouldn't have affected the outcome of the game. I was originally planning to play properly in the match point game, but you switched me out… I – I'm not trying to blame you. I'm sorry.

"They came looking for me many times before, but I only agreed to do it that one time. I thought… it wouldn't have a big effect on anything.

"I'm sorry, Captain.

"I didn't really want the team to lose, I wanted to win…"

"You're a world champion." After listening to Kan mumble on for quite some time, the other person finally spoke.

Lu Boyuan's voice was low and deep, without much emotion, so calm that it was like none of this involved him. He asked, "Was it worth it?"

As one of the LPL's powerhouse teams, just TTC's annual salary and endorsement fees alone were a large sum of money.

The total price that the other side offered to Kan was no more than the income he would've received in two years.

"…you know this, there's already no next Worlds for me, Captain." There were tears in Kan's eyes, and his speech was a bit incoherent. "I haven't been playing well for the past two years, and the entire internet has been cursing me out. Ding-*ge* is already looking for a new mid laner too and isn't planning on renewing my contract. On top of that, my streams don't usually do very well, so after I leave the team, the streaming platform won't give me a very high base pay either… Captain, I have three younger sisters, and my parents have both lost their jobs. My dad was also diagnosed with kidney disease this year, so the entire family is depending on me…

"I'm sorry, my willpower wasn't resolute enough, I'm a good-for-nothing… I just wanted them to be able to get by a little easier.

"But I really only did it once. I must have been possessed at that time… I'm sorry."

The night wind rushed through the crack in the windows, whistling and howling.

The balcony descended into silence; the only sound left was Kan's heavy breathing.

“I know I don’t have the right to say all that.” Kan’s voice was hoarse. “Captain, I’m sor…”

“You don’t need to apologize to me.” Lu Boyuan interrupted him mildly.

He extinguished his cigarette in the ashtray, his voice so calm it was on the brink of indifference. “If I don’t win the championships, it’s my own problem, I can try again next year. But you can no longer do it over anymore. You should just – leave that apology for yourself.”

Jian Rong was deeply absorbed in listening, and he only startled out of it abruptly when someone pushed open the door to the balcony. He subconsciously hid to the right of the curtains.

Kan walked into the room, rubbing his eyes, and walked shakily away.

Even though he wasn’t purposefully eavesdropping, Jian Rong still unconsciously let out a sigh of relief. He was about to follow suit and leave when another series of footsteps came from the balcony. He hastily leaned backwards and hid back in his original position.

He saw Lu Boyuan enter the room, close the windows to the balcony, and then… walk over towards him.

Lu Boyuan was wearing a very thin long-sleeved shirt, and the smell of the cigarette smoke lingering around him had been diluted a lot by the night wind. He was holding an ashtray in his hand, and it was filled with many cigarette butts.

He stopped in front of Jian Rong. Jian Rong pressed his lips together briefly before he resigned himself and looked up. “Captain…”

After saying that, Jian Rong was also momentarily stunned.

Oh no.

Because of Kan’s endless calls of “*Captain*” “*Captain*” just then, Jian Rong ended up being led astray.

Jian Rong was about to backtrack when he heard Lu Boyuan let out a quiet “en.”

“Do you dislike the smell of cigarettes?” Lu Boyuan asked.

Since he had just smoked quite a few cigarettes, his voice was a bit raspy.

Jian Rong blinked, not having expected him to ask that question. He said, “I don’t dislike it.”

Lu Boyuan nodded and then asked, “Do you smoke?”

“No.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Good boy.”

That “*good boy*” nailed Jian Rong to the spot.

Perhaps because it had been too long since someone last said something similar to him, his heart was thumping wildly, and his ears also burned in bursts of heat.

“Not sleeping?” Lu Boyuan asked him.

“…my room was a little stuffy, so I wanted to come out and get some air.” Jian Rong paused before adding, “I wasn’t deliberately eavesdropping.”

“En, go ahead.”

Jian Rong nodded and turned to walk towards the balcony, only to hear Lu Boyuan say, “Hold on.”

Then, someone ruffled his hair very gently. Lu Boyuan’s palm was a little cold from being blown by the wind outside just then.

“Ding-*ge* has recently been forbidding me to smoke, so you have to keep this a secret.” Lu Boyuan said.

Jian Rong nodded like a block of wood. “…oh.”

Lu Boyuan was satisfied. “There’s a practice match tomorrow afternoon, so sleep a little earlier.”

After Lu Boyuan left, Jian Rong walked out onto the balcony and was blown by the cold wind for ten minutes.

Even though the temperature was in the single digits[3], he didn’t feel cold at all; instead, he felt like he was so hot that he was about to start sweating.

After standing there for a while longer, Jian Rong suddenly grabbed the collar of his shirt and tugged it up to his nose, sniffing it.

…it seemed to carry the scent of smoke.

Then he should stand here in the wind some more.

Jian Rong didn't know whether the smell of cigarette smoke really existed or if it was just in his imagination. Every once in a while, he would sniff his shirt again, and he only turned to go back inside once he felt like the scent dissipated entirely.

And then, the moment he turned around, he ran smack into the sight of Xiao Bai holding a pile of dripping wet clothes, intending to hang them out to dry on the balcony.

Drops of water completely covered the floor underneath the clothes, and it was clear that the other person had already been standing there for some time.

Xiao Bai stared at the teenager in front of him, who had stood out in the cold wind for quite a while, occasionally also sniffing his own shirt and touching his own hair. Xiao Bai's eyes were filled with 30% confusion, 30% bewilderment, and 40% bafflement. After a long silence, he finally said stiffly, "……er, good evening?"

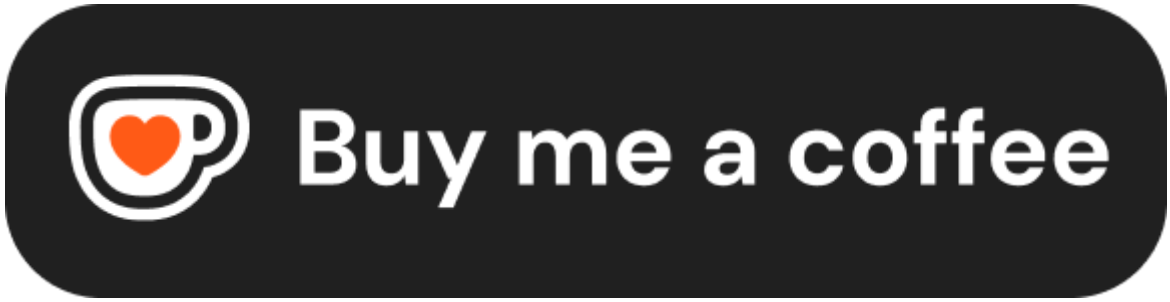
Translation Notes

1. *Acronym for 你说得对 (ni shuo de dui) – means 'you're right' basically* ^
2. *Calabash Brothers is a Chinese cartoon about seven brothers who are born from gourds and have special powers. (Kind of like… Chinese power rangers?? lmao) This really gave me a throwback, I remember*

watching this a lot as a kid haha. Point is it's very humorous and should not be taken seriously ^

3. *Celsius, obviously. (Probably around 32-48 degrees Fahrenheit for American friends.)* ^

Yan: Okay but the question is what is Xiao Bai doing drying his laundry at like 3 in the morning too?? *doesn't know whether to laugh or cry*



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ICDI Chapter 19: You're the person that I recommended in

"And then guess how he responded!!"

The next morning in the practice room, Xiao Bai moved his chair next to Pine's and rambled on about his story for a long time.

Pine was only wearing headphones on one side, but he wasn't paying attention to Xiao Bai either; instead, he was single-mindedly concentrating on his team fight.

Xiao Bai ignored Pine's indifference. After swallowing the *youtiao*[1] in his mouth, he said, "He actually also responded to me—with a 'good evening'!!!

"There's no way I misheard it. Even though his tone of voice still sounded extremely unenthusiastic, it was definitely a 'good evening'!"

Pine returned to base and cut off Xiao Bai before he could say 'good evening' a third time. "Didn't you say you two were absolutely irreconcilable?"

"Ah?" Xiao Bai paused before nodding. "Yeah."

Pine said, "Right now, it's like you want to wear the same pair of pants as him."

Xiao Bai: "..."

Pine continued to stare at his computer screen expressionlessly. “Do you not feel like you’re very similar to a certain group?”

Xiao Bai: “What group?”

Pine: “That group of dumbass fans in his livestream room.”

Xiao Bai: “…BS.”

“Why did you go dry your clothes in the middle of the night at two a.m.?” Pine asked.

“I couldn’t sleep, so I decided I might as well just do my laundry.” Xiao Bai leaned back in his chair. “Never mind about me. When I returned to my room after hanging up my clothes, both you and Qian-*ge*’s lights were still on in your rooms. I saw it from the crack underneath the door.”

“I didn’t really sleep…” After his game concluded, Qian-*ge* rubbed his eyes and said, “Nobody in the base should’ve been able to sleep well last night, probably.”

“No, Soft definitely slept very soundly.” Xiao Bai said, “He never liked Kan.”

As soon as he said that, the person himself appeared in the doorway.

Jian Rong was holding a cup of milk, his hair a bit messy, his clothing somewhat rumpled as well. His eyelids were lowered listlessly, dark circles underneath his eyes, and he looked as if he could fall asleep on the spot if someone handed him a pillow.

In the course of opening the door, entering the room, walking to his spot, turning on the computer, and entering the game, he yawned a total of seven times.

Xiao Bai: "?"

Yuan Qian asked, "Soft, you didn't sleep well last night either?"

Jian Rong entered the queue and answered hoarsely, "En."

Yuan Qian nodded understandingly. "Don't stand in the wind for so long on the balcony next time, it's easy to get a headache."

A cold arrow-like gaze shot over, and Xiao Bai felt a chill run down his back. He slowly nudged his seat back over to his computer using his butt.

"It has nothing to do with standing in the wind." Jian Rong randomly made up an excuse. "I suddenly had some trouble falling asleep in a different bed."

Everyone in the practice room: "..."

That really was quite sudden.

Jian Rong created a custom game and practiced waveclearing for half an hour, before finally he couldn't help but pick up his cup and walk towards the break room.

TTC's base had ample amounts of everything. The break room table was full of tea bags, cocoa powder, and more, and there was a coffee machine on the side.

Jian Rong didn't know how to use it, nor did he have any interest in trying to figure it out. He arbitrarily chose an instant coffee packet and mixed it with hot water.

The warm, winter sunlight slanted into the room, just happening to land on Jian Rong's face, comfortable and pleasing.

There was no added sugar or creamer in the black coffee, making Jian Rong crinkle his brows from the bitterness.

But he finally gained a bit of energy. There was still a practice match in the afternoon, and if he continued to be sleepy, he wouldn't be able to play well.

"Who are you?" A gravelly, rough voice came from behind him.

Jian Rong looked back, picking up his cup, and came face-to-face with Kan, whose eyes were swollen like walnuts.

Kan was built quite robustly, and he was also tall, so he could block the entire doorway to the break room just by standing there. He was clearly in a bad mood, and he hadn't slept enough either, so he wasn't wearing a very good expression.

After seeing Jian Rong, his complexion grew even worse, his brows furrowed tight enough to pinch a mosquito to death.

Everyone knew that the competitions that Soft watched the most often were TTC's, and the player that he mocked the most frequently was Kan.

If there was one professional player who had the deepest hatred towards Soft, then it could only be Kan.

At the beginning, Kan's fans would even go to Soft's stream and curse him out, but because they couldn't out-curse Soft's fans, and Soft himself didn't care about their attacks, they eventually stopped causing trouble.

Soft didn't use any beauty filters when streaming, so Kan recognized him the moment he saw him.

"Soft?" Kan was stunned. He was already annoyed in the first place, and when he saw the cup of coffee in Jian Rong's hand, the nameless fire in his heart roared even higher, to the point that he lashed out rudely. "Why the fuck are you here? Who brought you here?"

It seemed like Jian Rong wouldn't be able to leave anytime soon.

He took a step back and stood next to the window again, basking in the sun while asking, "Are you in charge of this place?"

Jian Rong's tone of voice, which was just as careless as it was in his streams, made Kan even angrier upon hearing it. He said impatiently, "I'm not in charge, but a trash streamer like you isn't worthy of entering our base. It doesn't matter who brought you here, hurry up and get lost."

Jian Rong sneered. "If a trash streamer like me isn't worthy, then a matchfixing[2] pro player like you is worthy?"

It was as if someone had stabbed Kan in the heart, and his blood rushed straight to his head.

Even though what was done couldn't be undone, the LPL was still tying up the last of the loose ends, and TTC hadn't released a corresponding announcement yet either. There shouldn't be many people who knew about it…

He looked Jian Rong up and down again.

One of TTC's merch mugs, cozy and loose clothing, disheveled hair, as well as a pair of black slippers—the indolent appearance of someone who had just woken up.

And there was a rule in the base: no outside visitors could spend the night.

Kan suddenly remembered. Yesterday night, he had secretly asked Yuan Qian whether the team had found a new mid laner or not.

Yuan Qian had been silent for a long time, before he finally told him that the new mid laner was already going through tryouts at the base.

Kan felt shocked, and he only recovered after quite a while. He asked, astonished, "Are you here for tryouts?"

Jian Rong lowered his head and took a sip of coffee, too lazy to reply.

Kan laughed, a laugh triggered from anger. He said, "Ding-*ge* can't find any other mid laners? How come he'll take in any kind of scum?"

If anyone else heard that, they would probably be offended, but Jian Rong wasn't.

Compared to those fans in his livestream room, Kan was just like a baby chick throwing a tantrum.

Jian Rong thought a bit and said, “He probably lowered his standards a little after he met you.”

Kan involuntarily took two steps forward, his face turning red. “How am I the problem? I’ve played competitively for eight years, during which I haven’t made many mistakes. But you, you’re just a piece of trash that became famous for insulting other people, you don’t know how to do anything else except badmouth players day in and day out… you’re built so small, you must not be an adult yet, right? Did your parents teach you how to respect other people or not? Did they teach you how to behave yourself?”

The more Kan spoke, the angrier he got. “I’m telling you, I don’t really have any misgivings anymore. I’m definitely going to find a lawyer and sue you, there’s no way I’ll let garbage like you continue to terrorize the internet. I’m also going to tell Ding-*ge* about everything you did online and make him kick you out…”

Jian Rong nodded, digesting what Kan said for a beat before asking, “So what you’re trying to imply is that even though you play like trash, you won’t allow anyone else to say it, right?”

Kan choked and was about to retort when Jian Rong spoke again.

“But you did get one thing right. I didn’t have anyone to teach me, so I just can’t control my mouth when I see pro players with contract fees worth

millions of yuan perform so terribly. That's my problem, I didn't take your feelings into consideration…" Jian Rong said casually, "It's fine if you sue me, I'll definitely apologize in court. I can even apologize to your fans too. 'I was wrong, my mistake was that I redescribed Kan's trash gameplay,' how does that sound?"

Kan's neck was flushed from fury. He was controlled by his emotions, his shoulders heaving up and down in time with his breathing, and he subconsciously picked up the canned Ovaltine next to him.

"What are you doing?" A gentle, deep voice spoke up, breaking through their deadlock.

It was Lu Boyuan.

He wore gray-colored casual clothing, the same color as Jian Rong's long-sleeved shirt, and he stood behind Kan, holding a cup.

Although it was a question, his expression was calm, as if he didn't really need an answer.

When Jian Rong saw him, he lowered his eyes and straightened up, stealthily loosening his firm hold on his mug, which he had gripped in preparation to retaliate at any moment.

Kan's rationality returned, and he glanced at the object in his hand. He explained after a long moment, "…I-I wanted to make some to drink."

Lu Boyuan gave an "en" that was neither light nor heavy. "Go find Ding-*ge* after you finish drinking it, he still has some things to discuss with you."

"…got it." Kan's breathing still hadn't evened out yet, and he shot Jian Rong a vicious glare before he put the Ovaltine back in its original spot. "I'll go find him right now, I suddenly don't feel like drinking it anymore."

Lu Boyuan rinsed his water glass. "Go ahead."

Only two people were left in the break room.

Jian Rong lowered his head, wondering if his voice was too loud just then, and made to leave the room with his coffee.

"He's not in a good mood, so don't take anything he said to heart." Lu Boyuan said as he poured ground coffee into the coffee machine.

Jian Rong paused, and said, "Okay."

Lu Boyuan pressed a button before he turned to look at him. "Then, did you win or lose the argument?"

"…" Jian Rong met his gaze for a few seconds and said, "I've never lost an argument before."

Lu Boyuan laughed. When he smiled, his eyes grew very bright, making Jian Rong feel even more comfortable than the sunlight on his face did.

Lu Boyuan glanced at the instant coffee packaging in the trash can. He said, "En, I'll make you a cup of coffee as a reward?"

Jian Rong watched him quietly.

Lu Boyuan: "Don't want it?"

Jian Rong poured out all of the instant coffee, answering his question with actions instead of words.

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of fiddling with the coffee machine when the person next to him suddenly asked a question.

“Will I be kicked out?”

Lu Boyuan didn’t look over. “Why are you asking that.”

Jian Rong raked through his bangs and said, after a lengthy silence, “Kan is a former teammate, and I’m not compatible with the others either.”

“We’ll only know if you’re compatible or not once we have some practice matches.” Lu Boyuan said, “Or do you not have the confidence to play well?”

“I do.” Jian Rong answered very quickly. A few seconds later, he repeated again, “I can play well.”

Lu Boyuan handed a cup of coffee to him. “Then perform well this afternoon, don’t make me lose face.”

Jian Rong absent-mindedly accepted the cup. “Make you… lose face? Why?”

Lu Boyuan said, “Because you’re the person that I recommended in.”

Jian Rong stared at him blankly. After quite some time, he asked again, “Why?”

Lu Boyuan hid his smile. “Why… I also want to know the reason why your resume made its way over to me?”

Jian Rong: “……”

Why did he have to ask so many whys???

If Jian Rong said that he accidentally saw Lu Boyuan’s QQ ID during his livestream, and not-so-accidentally noted it down for two years, then would he instantly be labeled a pervert and kicked out of the club?

Jian Rong wanted to stuff his head in his coffee mug right that instant.

Luckily, Ding-*ge* happened to arrive at that moment, rescuing Jian Rong’s head.

“So this is where you were.” Ding-*ge* said, “I’ve been looking for you for a while.”

Lu Boyuan put down his coffee mug. “You finished discussing everything with Kan?”

Ding-*ge* nodded heavily. “En, he didn’t have any objections, but…”

Halfway through, he glanced at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong instantly said, “…I’m going to go practice now.”

Jian Rong walked away extremely fast, nearly causing the coffee in his cup to spill over onto the ground.

Once he left, Lu Boyuan asked mildly, “Has the heating been turned up too high lately in the base?”

Ding-*ge* was startled. “Twenty degrees[3], what’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Lu Boyuan paused. “The little friend in our team often has a red face from the heat.”

“Then I’ll go and adjust it a bit lower in a bit.” Ding-*ge* thought a little. “It’s probably because young people have higher internal heat…”

Translation Notes

1. *Deep fried breadstick, usually eaten for breakfast* ^
2. *I previously translated matchfixing as “playing fake matches” because I didn’t know a better term. However, now I’ve found the appropriate term, so I’ll be using this going forth. I’ve also made edits in the previous chapters!* ^
3. *20 degrees Celsius = 68 degrees Fahrenheit. That’s cold for the middle of winter???* ^

Wei: Jian Rong to Xiao Bai, probably: Why are you so obsessed with me?? (Although also LBY to Jian Rong, probably LMAO)

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 20: Practice match.

Bonus Ko-fi chapter 5/6~

After watching Jian Rong return to the practice room, Ding-*ge* made a cup of Ovaltine for himself before closing the door to the break room.

"There's another thing." Ding-*ge* massaged his forehead. "Someone from the legal department came over, and the penalty fee they calculated is quite high. The LPL's approach to this matter is unyielding, so Kan probably won't even be able to stream in the future. Once the announcement is made… he'll be as good as finished."

Matchfixing was extremely malicious behavior. When everyone first found out, they seethed with anger, and Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian itched to drag Kan back from the LPL and give him a beating. But once more time passed, everyone inevitably couldn't help but recall that period when they all struggled, ate instant noodles, and fought through small competitions together.

During Kan's early years in the team, he was a very enthusiastic and sincere person. He left home when he was quite young to start working for his family, and he persevered from esports' unpopular phase all the way until now.

Because he had been in the team for a long time, everyone in the team more or less had received his help.

Later on, the esports industry grew more and more superficial, and the new replaced the old more and more quickly. Endorsements and signing fees in the upper millions easily led many people astray.

Kan didn't have enough willpower, and regretfully ended up on the wrong path.

Ding-*ge* rubbed his eyes and said resentfully, "Originally, I was planning to have him transition to behind the scenes. Even though a coach's salary isn't as high as a player's, at the very least it's still a decent job… never mind. His luggage is all packed already, and the car is about to arrive at the base. I booked an airplane ticket back to his hometown for him."

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and gave a somewhat indifferent noise of agreement.

"That's all, I just wanted to be transparent with you, since you have an interview in a few days. At that time, how to respond if you're asked about this… you can decide by yourself." Ding-*ge* glanced at the time. "The car is going to get here soon, I'll go out and take care of it."

Lu Boyuan nodded and put down his cup before he remembered something. "What team is this afternoon's practice match scheduled with?"

"MFG." Ding-*ge* said, "Their coach has been trying to schedule a match with me for a long time, it just happened to work out this time."

As one of the LPL's powerhouse teams, TTC would receive numerous practice match invitations every week. Most of the teams who came looking for them were of average or above strength. Teams who didn't have good

scores firstly didn't have a way in to schedule practice matches, and secondly, they knew that they weren't powerful enough. Never mind if they won or not, they might even ultimately shatter their own players' mental fortitude by accident.

Although MFG got no further than the top sixteen in this year's World Championship, their overall strength had already risen a lot, so they were perfect for practicing with a newcomer.

Lu Boyuan nodded. "Got it."

Not long after Jian Rong went back to the practice room, someone pushed open the practice room door.

Kan stood outside the door and didn't enter, holding his luggage. He licked his lips a few times before he finally said, "I'm leaving now. I'm sorry."

Before he came, Xiao Bai was in the middle of duo queueing with Pine and farming League Points. Xiao Bai's cries and Pine's disdainful tongue clicks filled the entire room.

The moment he spoke, the two of them instantly quieted down.

They didn't look back, nor did they stop playing the game, as if they didn't see the person standing in the doorway at all.

Jian Rong wasn't used to this kind of situation, and he silently turned up his game sound volume.

Kan awkwardly stood there for two minutes before he clenched his teeth and turned to leave.

“Travel safely.” In the end, Yuan Qian’s heart softened, and he softly said that one line.

Immediately, Kan’s tears fell, and he nodded a few times dazedly. “Okay.”

—

Because of what happened with Kan, a few members’ spirits were low all the way up until the practice match.

“What’s up with you all? A passerby would think that the team’s about to dissolve after this match,” Ding-*ge* asked, frowning.

“It’s nothing.” Yuan Qian said, “I just didn’t sleep well during my midday nap.”

Xiao Bai said, dispirited, “Me too.”

Ding-*ge*: “…”

Did the concept of a midday nap even exist in the world of gaming youths?

“Play seriously.” Lu Boyuan slipped on his headphones. “This is part of Soft’s tryouts.”

Jian Rong startled and opened his mouth to say that it didn’t matter, it was fine as long as he himself played well.

But Xiao Bai, who was sitting next to him, suddenly straightened up and asked, “Ding-*ge*, how should we play this match?”

Ding-*ge* lifted an eyebrow. “It’s tryouts, I’m not going to voice any suggestions. You guys do what you want.”

“Then, Soft, what kind of playstyle are you used to?” Yuan Qian asked. “You like to play assassins, right? I’ll choose a tankier, engager champ then.”

“…it’s alright.” Jian Rong pursed his lips. “You guys play according to your own rhythm, you don’t need to worry about me.”

As soon as they entered the custom lobby, MFG’s members took the initiative to interact with them before the game officially began.

[MFG-Kongkong: Big brothers, good afternoon]

[TTC · Bye: As long as you don’t come 4v2 me later in the bot lane, then you can be my good little brother]

[MFG-Kongkong: Alrighty. Bai-*ge*, who’s your mid laner ah?]

Jian Rong was on his probationary period’s side account.

[TTC · Bye: Guess]

“Stop interacting with them.” MFG’s coach said, “Their team hasn’t even posted an official announcement yet, why would they possibly tell you?”

Kongkong said, “I’m just curious. Look, Bai-*ge* told me to guess, which means this mid laner is definitely someone I also know.”

“The esports circle is only so big, it’s not like you only know a few people?” The coach paused and said, “If you’re really that curious, you’ll find out in a bit when you fight against him.”

The practice match soon began.

During the ban and pick phase, Yuan Qian asked, “Soft, are there any champions you’re particularly afraid of?”

Jian Rong didn’t even think about it. “Nope.”

Yuan Qian: “…okay.”

From the get-go, MFG banned Lu Boyuan’s commonly played Lee Sin and Camille.

“Even banning Camille…” Xiao Bai lifted a brow. “*Ge*, if you play a Teemo jungle one day, will Teemo also be sent off into the ban list?”

Teemo could be considered one of LoL’s most unique champions. He looked adorable, his skills were weak, and he was ardently adored by a multitude of female players.

If this champion was chosen in Platinum and up ranked games, then the player would have to prepare to be insulted by their teammates. Since Teemo was lacking in every aspect, he had never stepped into LoL’s competitive arena before.

Lu Boyuan laughed. “That wouldn’t happen.”

On the other side, Kongkong snatched up LeBlanc first. Jian Rong swept a quick look over the team composition before he unhesitatingly picked Orianna.

"??" Xiao Bai said, shocked, "You even know how to play Orianna?"

Orianna was a classic example of a farming, team fighting champion, and she was known as a late game queen. In the early game, this champion was just mindless waveclear waveclear waveclear, and Xiao Bai had never seen Jian Rong play her before during a livestream.

"I also know how to play Teemo." Jian Rong asked, "Do you want to see?"

Xiao Bai shut his mouth.

Yuan Qian said, "Captain, assist me more in this round. MFG's top lane has a huge gap, if you come we can easily get a kill."

Hearing that, Jian Rong subconsciously typed in the chat the words that he said the most often when playing ranked.

[asdsdfz: No need to assist mid]

The team chat quieted for a few seconds.

[TTC · Bye: Aren't we using voice chat?]

Jian Rong: "...sorry, habit."

[TTC · Road: Okay.]

Jian Rong: "..."

After entering the game, both sides entered their respective lanes.

Everyone thought that Jian Rong picked Orianna so that he could delay to late game and team fight, but unexpectedly, when the match just hit six minutes—

"First blood!"

Jian Rong took LeBlanc's head and got the first kill of the game.

Everyone was startled after they saw the kill notification, and they couldn't help but open the match stats page to repeatedly confirm it.

It was Orianna who killed LeBlanc, for sure…

"You're playing LeBlanc, and you got solo killed by Orianna at level 5???" MFG's top laner exclaimed.

Kongkong hadn't expected it either.

LeBlanc was known for being agile, and her blink skill could be recast with hardly any cooldown. Nobody expected Orianna to toss out her spells even faster, positioned very incredibly as well. Quite a few times, he even started suspecting that he was the one walking into the other person's skills…

The most unbelievable thing was that the other person was actually able to deal damage while simultaneously avoiding LeBlanc's CC chain.

Kongkong retrospectively realized—TTC's new mid laner hadn't picked Orianna to team fight at all. Instead, it was because he believed that he could deal with Kongkong's LeBlanc even if he used Orianna.

“Amazing,” Yuan Qian complimented without holding back at all. He then said, “But you have to be a little careful now. The substitute jungler playing for MFG today has a bad habit…”

Jian Rong was buying equipment, and he gave an “en” without paying much attention or questioning further.

However, he soon found out.

Seven minutes into the game, the enemy jungler, Rek’Sai, jumped out from the side. Jian Rong immediately used a flash to escape.

Nine minutes in, Rek’Sai drilled out of the ground again. Jian Rong used a Stopwatch to evade Kongkong’s damage and fled with low health.

Twelve minutes in, Jian Rong had just stepped onto the lane when the enemy mid laner, jungler, and support joined hands to tower dive and kill him. Before he died, he released a perfect combo, successfully taking the enemy jungler’s head.

…

In less than ten minutes, Jian Rong was ganked six times.

Upon returning to the respawn point, he took a deep breath before sullenly buying equipment.

[[All] TTC · Bye: How come your team is starting to practice so early?]

Lately, most teams were still on break, including TTC. They were just playing one practice match today, but they weren’t formally beginning to practice

just yet.

Right after Xiao Bai sent that line, he heard someone ask in his headphones, “You can type in all chat during practice matches?”

“Generally, you can…” Xiao Bai only abruptly realized who was asking the question after he had already responded.

His eyes widened, and he promptly added, “But you—”

[[All] asdsdfz: Is the original account owner playing mid?]

[[All] TTC · Bye: …]

[[All] MFG-Kongkong: Ah?]

[[All] MFG-Kongkong: I’m the original account owner, what’s wrong 0.0]

[[All] asdsdfz: Nothing.]

[[All] asdsdfz: So attentively ganking mid, I even thought your club’s boss was the one using your account.]

Everyone in MFG: “…”

Originally, MFG’s jungler kept ganking mid with a sort of “*if I can’t gank you then I’ll keep trying there’s no way I can’t kill you one time*” peeved attitude.

Seeing the line in the chat, he couldn’t resist the provocation and ganked mid again. This time, Jian Rong had his flash, and the jungler couldn’t even touch him; to top it off, he also lost half his health.

[[All] asdsdfz: Don't give up, you'll definitely succeed next time!]

Everyone in MFG: "……"

[[All] asdsdfz: How about you call over your top laner and ADC too, and I'll arrange a grand banquet for you all in the mid lane? Consider it as team building.]

Everyone in MFG: "……"

His derisiveness: the nail in the coffin.

MFG's top laner, who was on his way to the mid lane, asked carefully, "Uh, should I still come?"

Kongkong wrinkled his brows and hesitated briefly before he finally answered, "Come, your top lane is done for anyway, we might as well just push a tower first at mid."

As a result, everyone in MFG except the ADC arrived at the mid lane and promptly tower dove to kill the other side.

The instant that they tossed out their skills, Jian Rong used his Zhonya's Hourglass, which made him invulnerable to damage for 2.5 seconds, causing MFG's three ults to disappear into the void.

MFG's jungler was infuriated. "Just wait, once the Hourglass effect wears off, he'll still have to die…"

As soon as he said that, the four of them abruptly had their game sight radius reduced—Lu Boyuan, controlling Graves, made it over just in time,

and he tossed out a smoke canister right on top of them.

But Jian Rong was still in a very bad position, and it looked like he was going to die no matter what.

Jian Rong straightened up and was about to deal as much damage as he could before dying when he suddenly heard the sound of a flash, and Thresh's lantern landed securely at his feet.

Thresh was the support champion that Xiao Bai was playing. He had a lantern skill that allowed a teammate to immediately dash over to Thresh's location once they clicked on the lantern; it was an exceptionally good skill for escaping and chasing.

Jian Rong instinctively clicked on the lantern and, upon landing safely, he heard someone muttering in his headphones—

"The hell…" Xiao Bai mumbled. "Only their support knows how to gank? Treating me like I'm dead!"

Jian Rong successfully got away, and he said quietly, "Thanks."

Xiao Bai: "No probl—what'd you say???"

Jian Rong clammed up and went silent.

He was about to re-enter the fight when he heard the sound of a game announcement—*"Triple kill!"*

While MFG's jungler was frantically ganking mid, Lu Boyuan had completely taken over MFG's jungle.

He consumed the resources of two jungles and also killed MFG's top laner three times, inadvertently becoming the person with the highest damage in the match.

It reached the point where all Lu Boyuan had to do was casually fire his gun a few times before tossing out his ult, and he promptly got a triple kill.

Simultaneously, Pine solo killed the enemy ADC in the bot lane.

MFG's defeat in the first practice match was already set in stone.

Kongkong angled his camera over to Orianna, who was currently clearing minions. "Coach… don't you think this Orianna's style… is just a tiny bit familiar?"

"It can't be him." The coach paused. "I've looked into him before, he almost never plays Orianna."

"It's not like this is your freaking average Orianna either!" Kongkong said, "What kind of Orianna would walk right up to LeBlanc's face and deal damage—"

During the second practice match, Jian Rong successfully picked LeBlanc.

After rising to level 6, Jian Rong walked into MFG's jungle without a single look back.

He was in the middle of contemplating which monster he should go camp out at when he saw his team's jungler pass by him.

"Come here," Lu Boyuan said.

Without any hesitation, Jian Rong followed after him at once.

The two of them ganked and killed MFG's jungler six times in the jungle, and they kept running away right after, so the only thing the rest of MFG saw when they rushed over was their own teammate's dead body.

Jian Rong, who was excellent at holding grudges while playing games, glanced at his game score and silently subtracted one.

This jungler had ganked him seven times last game.

Just one more time, and they would be even.

MFG's jungler today was a substitute, and it was as if Lu Boyuan could see his each and every movement. Finally, he typed in the all chat, wanting to cry but lacking the tears: [Lu-*ge*, it's been six times. I haven't even killed any valuable monsters yet, it can't be worth it…]

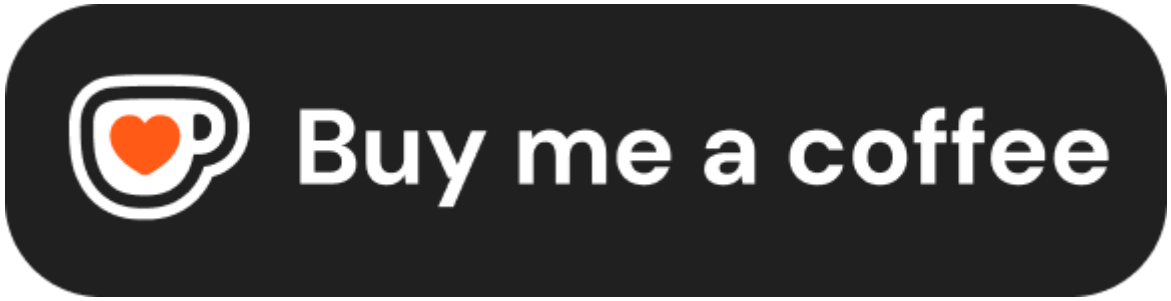
While recalling to base, Jian Rong took a peek from his peripheral vision and saw Lu Boyuan, who was sitting next to him, suddenly click on the chat and leisurely type something.

[[All] TTC · Road: Mn]

MFG's jungler had just released a breath of air when—

[[All] TTC · Road: But you ganked our mid laner seven times in the last game]

Yan: Hehe I always like it in gaming novels when one person gets revenge for the other person's deaths/injustice :))



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ICDI Chapter 21: Congrats in advance to TTC for joyously finishing in S11's Top 16.

The scheduled practice match was a best of three format. TTC consecutively won two rounds, so they didn't need to play the last round.

By the time the game finished, MFG's jungler had died eight times. When the base was being breached, he had even ended up selling all his equipment, extremely dejected.

The moment they withdrew from the custom lobby, Xiao Bai subconsciously turned his head and looked past Pine to explain to Jian Rong, "MFG's jungler today was originally their starting jungler, but because his attitude was too bad, he ended up becoming a substitute in less than one season. He has this old habit of ganking the lane with the biggest disadvantage, which is usually fine when playing ranked or in laid-back practice matches, but he always ended up being hammered by those operation-focused teams in competitions…"

Jian Rong took off his headphones and tilted his head when he heard Xiao Bai speak, listening to him quietly.

"One time in a regular season match, he also ended up ganking our bot lane four times in less than ten minutes, freaking useless…" Only Xiao Bai finished his nonstop babbling did he realize that his relationship with this person didn't seem to be at the point where they could mutually roast other teams' players yet.

Thinking that Jian Rong would, as usual, let out an indifferent “oh” or straight up walk away, Xiao Bai shut his mouth and prepared to preemptively end the conversation.

“En.” Jian Rong unplugged his headphones. “He is pretty trash.”

Xiao Bai: “!”

Ding-*ge* leaned against the door, replying to messages. Seeing Xiao Bai and their new mid laner interact with each other quite nicely, he thought that at least this practice match wasn’t completely useless.

He lowered his head and responded to the WeChat message that MFG’s coach sent.

[MFG Coach: Another match next time?]

[D: No, there’s no point if you’re just going to let a water dispenser player go up during a practice match.]

A water dispenser player referred to those substitute players who sat in the backstage room watching the water dispenser and very rarely had a chance to play in a competition.

This jungler was a bit more tragic than that. During the last Worlds, he didn’t play a single game, and even MFG’s fans joked that if the starting jungler hadn’t broken his arm, the team wouldn’t have let the substitute go on stage at all.

Once this season ended, perhaps this jungler wouldn't even be a substitute anymore.

[MFG Coach: That's not it, it's not like I wanted to either. Our starting jungler went back to his hometown to take care of family matters and won't be able to return for some time. Next time, next time the entire team will be starters for sure.]

[D: Then let's talk about it again next time.]

[MFG Coach: Ok. Speaking of which, your new mid laner is pretty strong, where'd you find him?]

Ding-*ge* knew that the other person was trying to fish for answers, and he answered gleefully.

[D: Don't know, Road recommended him, if you want to know then go ask him]

Ding-*ge* locked his phone and knocked on the door. "Road, come with me to the meeting room. The rest of you are dismissed."

TTC had a room specifically used for practice matches, and the members sat in the same fixed order as they would during a competition. As the mid laner, Jian Rong sat in the very middle, with the jungler and ADC on either side of him.

Jian Rong picked up his own equipment and was about to leave when someone suddenly tugged at the hem of his shirt very gently.

Lu Boyuan looked at the keyboard he was holding in his arms, and he inquired, “Is it possible to carry another one?”

Two minutes later, Jian Rong walked out of the practice room hugging two people’s equipment in his arms, like a primary school student carrying his backpack.

—

The last day of the tryouts, Ding-*ge* scheduled another practice match.

The scheduled team this time was even weaker than MFG, but it was composed of all starters, so they had strategies and coordination, and there was a bit more meaning to it.

Although TTC still won 2:0, at least it felt a little more like a real game, not like MFG’s match where the jungler led all three lanes to ruin.

When Jian Rong came out of the bathroom, he just happened to see Ding-*ge* and Lu Boyuan walk downstairs together.

Lu Boyuan was wearing an unzipped black parka, revealing the sweater inside. He also had on a hat and a mask, as if he were about to go out.

Ding-*ge* was saying something to Lu Boyuan. His voice was lowered, so Jian Rong couldn’t hear very clearly.

“See what the doctor says in a bit… if… then don’t…” As Ding-*ge* spoke, he spotted a blue head next to the stair handrail from the corner of his eyes. “Jian Rong?”

Before Jian Rong could say anything, Ding-*ge* spoke again. “Good thing you’re here, I can let you know in advance. You’ve passed the tryouts, and they’ll be sending over the contract soon. You didn’t have any issues with the initial draft, but I later amended it a bit… Your foundation was built from streaming, so your base salary and percentage allotment with StarTV should be able to be negotiated a little higher. Once all the details are ironed out, I’ll go find you, it should only take a few days.”

Jian Rong said, “Mn.”

“So calm?” Ding-*ge* lifted an eyebrow. “Not happy?”

As a result, the corners of Jian Rong’s lips tugged up very half-heartedly. “Happy.”

Ding-*ge*: “…”

Lu Boyuan gave a soundless chuckle.

“You’re going back to the practice room, right?” Ding-*ge* was helpless. “Perfect, I have something to tell them, let’s go together.”

Jian Rong thought that Ding-*ge* was going to discuss their practice match from earlier in the day, but unexpectedly, Ding-*ge* said the moment he pushed open the door, “No one look at Weibo today.”

Everyone in the practice room: “…”

If he hadn’t said that, they wouldn’t really feel like checking Weibo anyway.

But now that he did say that, they immediately wanted to go and surf through Weibo.

"Forget it, it's not like I can stop you guys. Nobody listens to me either when I tell you to uninstall the app during competitions…" Ding-*ge* said, "Then just one requirement: no one is allowed to say anything. Likes, comments, reposts, they're all forbidden. If you're going to look, you can only do so with your side account, understood?"

The instant Ding-*ge* left, the people who were originally playing the game promptly relinquished their mice and single-mindedly began scrolling through their phones, their movements terrifyingly in sync.

Jian Rong: "…"

Consequently, he leaned back in his chair and also opened up Weibo.

Jian Rong's side account followed numerous esports bloggers that Weibo had recommended to him. This afternoon, one of the official LPL Weibo's posts was dominating the entire homepage.

The title of the official account's article was: [The Penalization Decision Concerning TTC's Member TTC · Kan]

[Recently, TTC found that one of their players was being suspected of serious misconduct. The club took initiative to request an investigation and reported the incident to the League of Legends Pro League's Discipline Committee.

Through inquiry and verification, the Discipline Committee has ascertained:

During the S10 World Championship semifinals, TTC's Li Kan (ID: TTC · Kan) knowingly engaged in inappropriate behavior that affected the fairness of the competition. In addition, he utilized illegal means to influence the game and the competition outcome.

Based on these findings, the LPL Discipline Committee is imposing the following penalty: TTC's Li Kan (ID: TTC · Kan) will be suspended for 18 competitive months.

This penalty will be effective from the date of this announcement.

We hope that all professional players can abide by the relevant rules and Summoner's Code, forever holding fast to their own drive for the game.]

Matchfixing wasn't actually all that uncommon, but most of the time it happened in the LDL, where it was easiest to sway some young and inexperienced newcomers. The LPL's penalty was also almost always suspension.

Being suspended for 18 competitive months seemed light and harmless, but it was actually equivalent to sealing off Kan's competitive path. Once the suspension period was over, TTC wouldn't accept him back, nor would any other team take him in.

That bit of happiness from winning the practice match disappeared at once. Yuan Qian continuously sighed, and the other two people didn't say anything either.

Jian Rong was affected by the atmosphere, and he silently scrolled down to the top comments—

[Even daring to matchfix during the semifinals? Am I watching Worlds or the FIFA World Cup? Then who's going to be TTC's new mid laner? It can't be that substitute, right, to tell the truth that guy isn't quite good enough either…]

[Feel so bad for God Lu… being matchfixed by this kind of dumbass, my heart is really breaking.]

[Are you certain he only fixed one match? I feel like he's been in cahoots this entire season??]

The top three comments were still relatively normal.

[How come @TTC · Kan's horde of idiot fans still aren't quickly kneeling before my son @Soft and apologizing??]

Jian Rong: "?"

Although the other comments had many likes, they only had a few replies, at the most forty or fifty.

But this comment had over four hundred replies.

[That dumbass streamer's livestream room has already been locked, why are you dogs still barking?]

[My son got locked because he's still underage. 1) He's never stripteased or done anything obscene, 2) he's never matchfixed, 3) he didn't participate in that gamble your God Kan created. You here talking about your mom?]

[Damn, @Soft son you've become a prophet]

[At the time my son was flamed into oblivion by those TTC fans. Now that the announcement is out, have all those fans just disappeared? Come out and solo your dad]

[Kan was the one matchfixing, what does it have to do with TTC's other members? A bunch of morons.]

[Okokok in any case all those TTC fans who came to badmouth my son because of this incident back then are all dumbasses, we can leave it at that.]

[TTC fans, just keep hopping. Even through the screen I can imagine your hopping mad appearance right now. There haven't been any particularly powerful pro mid laners looking for a team lately either, how will your precious club carry on in the future? They probably won't even be able to enter the knockout stage.]

[No need for a noob streamer's fans to be concerned~ just look at TTC's team configuration, we aren't worried about not being able to find a good mid laner.]

[Never mind, my son isn't here anymore. Anyone who's a dad, go set off 999 firecrackers for him. Congrats in advance to TTC for joyously finishing in S11's Top 16!]

[Hehe, if my son wasn't locked out of his livestream right now, he would instantly start a big rapping competition in his stream upon seeing this. Not a single one of you @TTC Esports Club, @TTC · Road, @TTC · Bye, @TTC · Pine, @TTC · Qian, @TTC · Kan better think of freaking getting away!]

Sensing a scorching gaze coming from next to him, Jian Rong slowly turned his head.

And then, he met his neighbor Xiao Bai's eyes.

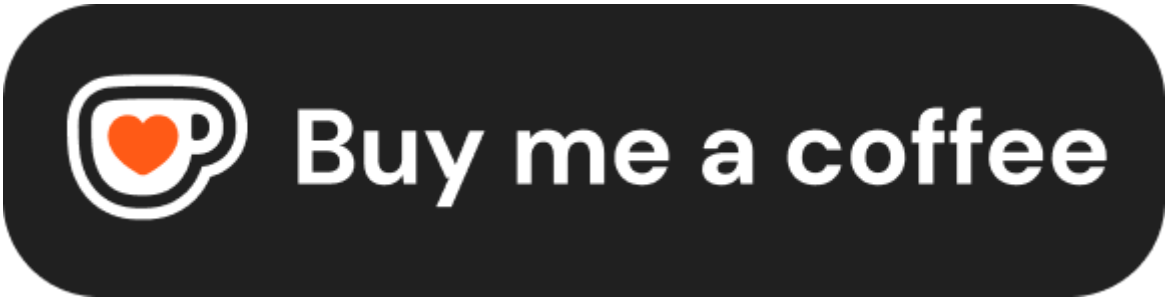
Xiao Bai's phone screen was the same as his, stopped amidst this comment's replies.

Xiao Bai: "..."

Jian Rong: "..."

Yan: The author stated that they based Kan's announcement off of one of the LPL's actual penalty announcements. I also used this post for reference (and thus realized the actual term for matchfixing face palms). By this point all previous references to matchfixing as 'playing fake matches' should be fixed!

Wei: Wow... All these fans really setting themselves up for some face slapping haha



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ICDI Chapter 22: I'll leave climbing to Diamond 1 in your hands then.

Last Ko-fi bonus chapter 6/6~ We'll be going back to our normal MWF release schedule for now!

Jian Rong hadn't expected his own ID to appear in the top comments. In the replies, both sides were fighting fiercely; TTC had more fans, but the water friends from his livestream room could 1v2, so nobody was losing to the other.

Jian Rong had already been insulted a lot before this, and he didn't think much of it.

So when he saw Xiao Bai glaring at him with bitter reddened eyes, he momentarily didn't know how to react.

"…that's just how they are, insulting everyone they come across, they're not targeting you." Jian Rong frowned, attempting to comfort him a little.

Unfortunately, he hadn't mastered this "comfort" skill yet.

As a result, he held himself back for a long time before giving up. "But you're a grown man, you'll still cry after being insulted a tiny bit??"

Xiao Bai rubbed his eyes. "Who's crying from being insulted! How would I cry because of these trolls! As if they deserve it!"

A few seconds later, he added feebly, “Of course, I’m not trying to badmouth your fans…”

Jian Rong was confused. “Then why are you crying?”

Xiao Bai was too embarrassed to say that he was feeling sad for their teammate, who had been suspended because of matchfixing. He felt like saying it out loud was especially useless and unreasonable.

Consequently, he said, “After playing ranked for so many days, I still can’t make it up to Diamond 1. My heart feels bitter, is it not okay for me to cry a little!”

Jian Rong: “…”

“What the hell would an assassin-type mid laner like you understand! All you have to do is toss out a skill, annihilate the other side, and your points will skyrocket up! Have you ever thought about how hard it is for us lowly supports to climb? Right now all the ADCs in Diamond are morons!” The more Xiao Bai spoke, the more energetic he got. “And you stole away my jungler!”

Your jungler?

Jian Rong raised an eyebrow, that iota of compassion in his heart for Xiao Bai disappearing like smoke. “I didn’t steal him. How is it hard for a support to climb? Didn’t PUD’s support make it all the way up to Challenger by solo queueing?”

Xiao Bai: “…then aren’t you just implying that I’m not as good as him!”

Jian Rong looked away and leaned back in his chair. He said coolly, “If that’s how you want to interpret it, I can’t do anything about it either.”

The atmosphere in the practice room was originally quite sorrowful, but after their short bantering, Yuan Qian burst out laughing from behind them.

Pine set his phone down on the table before he expressionlessly continued to practice waveclearing.

Xiao Bai was so angry that all his tears were gone. Actually, he wasn’t usually so melancholy, but today, Kan’s long-time fans had sent many old pictures of him and Kan posing together to his private messages, and he inevitably felt moody after seeing too many of them.

He opened LoL, wanting to vent his feelings a little in game.

“What rank are you right now?” Jian Rong asked.

Xiao Bai: “Diamond 4.”

“What can you do besides being carried.”

“???”

Xiao Bai: “How come you’re consecutively attacking me—”

“Add that account.” Jian Rong repeated, “The ID is ‘What Can You Do Besides Being Carried.’”

“…” Xiao Bai was startled, and he only recovered after quite a while. “You’re going to carry me up?”

Jian Rong asked, “Coming or not?”

Xiao Bai added him at the speed of light. “Inviting you now, hurry and join… why do you have so many side accounts? Why not just directly use your main account to play with me? Aren’t you also climbing to Diamond 1?”

Jian Rong selected his roles. “Ask again and I’ll leave the party.”

Xiao Bai speedily started the game.

At the hospital.

Lu Boyuan sat on a long bench, rotating one wrist while playing on his phone with his other hand.

“I already told you not to look at Weibo, it’ll only make you upset…” Ding-*ge* glimpsed his expression, and he paused. “Why are you laughing?”

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes, reading all the different messages that his Weibo account had received. “It’s nothing.”

Ding-*ge* was about to say something when a call quickly came in.

He answered the phone and replied to the other side a few times before he hung up. He muttered, “This is the twelfth call I’ve received today. Really, I feel afraid now the moment I hear about a colleague’s concern. It’s one thing if they only ask about Kan, but they keep trying to ask about our mid laner using different methods.”

TTC was a rich and powerful club, so esports fans paid close attention to the club's each and every movement. Normally, just one of TTC's casual competition games was enough to enter the hot search, much less something major like switching mid laners.

Lu Boyuan didn't even look up. He said indifferently, "Post the official announcement sooner, and nobody will be asking you anymore."

"How can it be so fast? He hasn't even signed the contract yet." Ding-*ge* stopped before he said honestly, "Originally, we were intending to test him some more. Soft's strong points are very obvious, but his weak points are as well. His individual ability is extremely high, above Kongkong's in my opinion, but after these two practice matches, have you seen him take the initiative to coordinate with anyone?"

Lu Boyuan asked, "Then why did you decide on him?"

Ding-*ge* cleared his throat. "First of all, there's no time, and we have to start familiarizing him with the team's rhythm as early as possible. Secondly… there's actually only two or three months left until his eighteenth birthday."

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow.

Ding-*ge* said, "I'm afraid he'll have second thoughts and feel like streaming is still more profitable, so he'll dust his butt off and walk away."

Lu Boyuan laughed.

The probability wasn't entirely zero.

His phone suddenly buzzed. Lu Boyuan lowered his head and clicked on the notification.

[PUD, XIU: Bro, you free?]

XIU was PUD's jungler, a seasoned pro player who had entered during the same period as Lu Boyuan. They knew each other from before they even started playing competitively.

As the LPL's two current powerhouse teams, TTC and PUD had a decent relationship with each other, and they would nod and greet each other if they met backstage.

However, that was the limit of their interaction. After all, there were too many things that both teams competed for: championships, endorsements, sponsors… even their fans were constantly tearing each other apart on every social media site.

Last time, during the S10 Worlds, the broadcast gave TTC's players a lengthy shot and ended up being subjected to a torrent of abuse by PUD's fans.

So, among PUD's active members, only XIU could be considered Lu Boyuan's close friend.

[R: ?]

[PUD, XIU: Q a few games together?]

[R: Can't right now.]

[PUD, XIU: OK]

[PUD, XIU: Speaking of which, have you guys still not started searching for a new mid laner yet? In a bit, the spring season will be starting soon.]

[R: You're coming to fish for info too?]

[PUD, XIU: Hahaha, I'm genuinely curious]

[R: Already found one]

[PUD, XIU: Who? Give a hint, I promise I won't tell anyone else.]

[R: Even a promise is futile. Ding-*ge* is sitting next to me.]

XIU goaded him for a while, and in the end, he still wasn't willing to admit defeat.

[PUD, XIU: Then just give me a tiny hint, I'll try to guess it slowly by myself. That should at least be okay, right.]

A hint.

Lu Boyuan cast his eyes downward and thought for a moment.

[R: A fairly well-behaved kid.]

[PUD, XIU: I got it! It's definitely that little blondie from Europe!]

[PUD, XIU: Or is it that little shortie from Korea?]

[PUD, XIU: I remember that TTC's trainees are all fairly well-behaved? You guys didn't just pull someone from there, did you…]

His phone vibrated continuously, and Ding-*ge* frowned upon hearing it. “What’s going on?”

“Nothing.” Lu Boyuan locked his phone and said concisely, “Playing a riddle game.”

After the examination, Ding-*ge* asked eagerly, “How is it, Doctor? Are there improvements?”

The doctor looked at the X-ray and said noncommittally, “You haven’t been practicing much recently, right?”

Lu Boyuan gave a faint “en.” “I’ve almost forgotten how to play.”

Ding-*ge* sheepishly told the doctor that they had just finished playing a practice match earlier that afternoon. He asked, “With his current condition, can he continue training?”

“He can, but he still has to make sure and rest. He can’t continue on like before and practice for over ten hours at a time, that’s way too excessive. Reducing it by half is still a lot, and don’t lift heavy things either.” The doctor said, “Also, come back for regular checkups, the best would be if you came once a month.”

Ding-*ge* immediately scheduled next month’s checkup appointment.

On the way back to the base, Ding-*ge* launched into another round of nagging. He wasn’t a garrulous person; however, he couldn’t help but nag whenever he thought of Lu Boyuan’s wrist.

Lu Boyuan grew drowsy listening to him, and he decided to just lean back in his seat and pretend to sleep.

“I’ll draw up a new practice schedule for you once I get back. I’ll do my best to reduce the time wherever I can…” At the traffic light, Ding-*ge* shot a glance at the side of the road and continued, “There’s a milk tea shop over here. I’ll go and buy some drinks to comfort the rest of them, don’t they all say that drinking this will put you in a good mood?”

After parking the car, Ding-*ge* said, “Let me ask them what they want to drink. Do you want anything?”

“No… wait a moment.” Lu Boyuan opened his eyes and pulled out his phone from his pocket. “Let me ask.”

Ding-*ge* was startled. “Sure.”

Jian Rong’s profile picture was the photo of the stray cat that he had posted before on Weibo.

Lu Boyuan casually took a picture of the milk tea store and sent it over.

[R: What do you want to drink?]

This was their first time chatting since becoming friends on WeChat.

Two minutes passed without a reply, and Lu Boyuan was just about to call him, when—

[R-ong: I was playing ranked just then, let me ask right now]

[R-ong: Xiao Bai wants milk tea with full sugar, Pine and Qian-*ge* want green tea.]

[R: What does Jian Rong want.]

[R-ong: …]

[R-ong: Orange juice, thank you]

The car drove back to the base, and after they parked, Lu Boyuan was stopped by Ding-*ge* the moment he picked up two of the drinks.

"Don't lift heavy objects," Ding-*ge* said, "Let me do it!"

Lu Boyuan couldn't help but laugh. "It's not that bad… restrain yourself a little, don't make such a scene at the base. They'll think that I broke my hand."

"It's about the same. Last time, your hand was trembling so much that I felt panicked just looking at it."

The two of them walked towards the practice room. Halfway there, Ding-*ge* recalled something else. "That's right, don't you think that Soft is a bit antisocial? I feel like he seems pretty different in person compared to how he is in his streams, and he doesn't really like to talk a lot either. What if he doesn't get along with the others in the future…"

—"Who gave you the courage to play Riven top lane?"

A familiar voice, a cold intonation.

Xiao Bai said, "…I'm already playing very meticulously. Most importantly, this jungler keeps targeting me!"

Jian Rong: "Yes, so meticulously that you can't even deal out Riven's combos. In your hands, a perfectly good broken blade turned into a dagger."

"Your side account's MMR[1] is way too high. My opponent is a professional top laner, it's very normal that I can't defeat him!" Xiao Bai quibbled, "Also, aren't I trying to grow? I've wanted to play Riven for a long time."

"Never mind if you want to, first ask yourself if you deserve to or not." The banner stating that Riven had been slain popped up on the screen again, and Jian Rong grinded his teeth. "After this game, roll back over and play your Elise, or else get out of the party."

"Got it, got it." After being carried for an entire afternoon, Xiao Bai was entirely free from worry. "Once we win two more games, I'll be able to duo queue with P-baby… hey, wait a second?"

Xiao Bai realized something. "…the reason that you won't play on your main account with me can't be because you're afraid that you'll climb too much, so you won't be able to queue with my *ge* in the future, right?"

Lu Boyuan's account just reached the promotion series for Diamond 4. Because of restrictions between ranks, he could only duo queue with Diamond 2 players at the highest.

If Jian Rong got promoted to Diamond 1, he wouldn't be able to duo queue with Lu Boyuan anymore.

After being exposed, Jian Rong silently killed an enemy and didn't respond.

"...tch." Xiao Bai sincerely shook his head and sighed. "Details, you're the one who's the master of details. May I ask when your literary work, *Self-Cultivation for Fans*, will be coming out? This person named Bai will support you with a hundred copies at once."

Jian Rong: "Can you play the game quietly—"

A cup of orange juice was placed next to Jian Rong's hand.

Jian Rong's words came to an abrupt halt.

Lu Boyuan had just returned, and he carried with him the scent of winter, a little bit like the scent that Jian Rong had smelled before.

Jian Rong beat up Xiao Bai ten times in his mind before he said, "Thank you, how much was it? I'll transfer it to your WeChat."

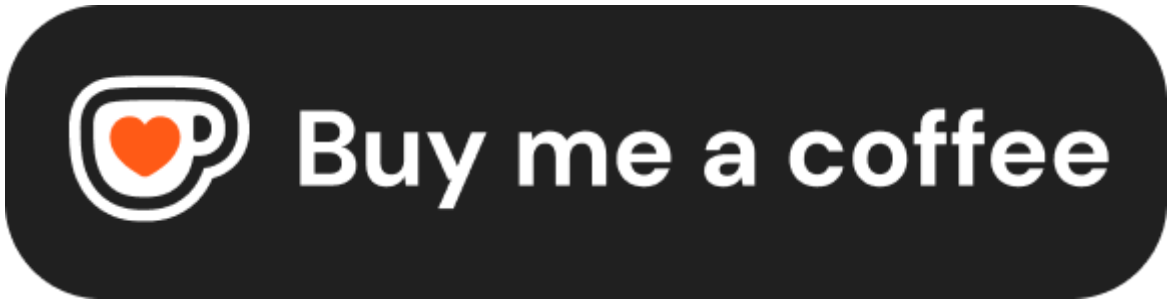
"No need." Lu Boyuan paused, a hint of laughter in his voice. "Consider it as a thank you gift for carrying me... I'll leave climbing to Diamond 1 in your hands then."

Translation Notes

1. *MMR = Match making rate. Hidden algorithm that determines matchmaking and incorporates a player's win rate and win/loss streak* ^

Yan: This boy really said he wanted orange juice, and I'm just ??? Orange juice boba? Alright then, Jian Rong... tag yourself though, I'm Xiao Bai for the boba order. What Ding-ge said is such a mood, boba always puts me in a good mood hehe.

Wei: Look at how Jian Rong and Xiao Bai's touching friendship is blooming! So exciting~



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ICDI Chapter 23: Whoosh~

After half a week, the contract finally arrived.

It was a short-term contract, lasting for only one season.

Jian Rong looked it over. The percentage allotment and base salary for streaming had been raised quite a bit, and he could tell that Ding-*ge* had already done his best to fight for him.

“Thank you.”

It took Ding-*ge* a moment to realize what he was thanking him for. He smiled. “No thanks needed, these were the terms negotiated based on your own worth.”

Jian Rong looked through the contract very cursorily. When he was flipping through the rules related to professional players, Ding-*ge* couldn’t help but remind him, “Pay closer attention to this page.”

As a result, Jian Rong stopped turning the pages and instantly pinpointed the content that Ding-*ge* wanted him to read.

Each regulation was written in an extremely lengthy and complicated manner. A rough summary was approximately—professional players were forbidden from idling, throwing the game, and insulting other players, both during competitions and otherwise, or else they would be fined by the LPL. A serious violation could even result in suspension.

Jian Rong was silent for a few seconds before he asked, "Can't AFK even during a normal ranked game?"

Ding-*ge*: "No."

Jian Rong wasn't willing to give up. "If there's a deviation in my gameplay and I die too many times, that's also out of the question?"

Ding-*ge* propped a hand against his forehead. "...don't think that the LPL people are idiots."

"Then what counts as insulting someone?" Jian Rong asked. "Does dumbass count?"

Ding-*ge*: "..."

Jian Rong settled for the next best option. "Moron? Idiot? Noob should at least be allowed, right."

"Who knows." Ding-*ge* was expressionless. "How about you test each of them out? It's only ten to twenty thousand yuan[1] per fine anyway."

Jian Rong didn't have anything else to say to that, and he signed his name on the contract.

"That's all. When you have time, I'll find some people to help you move the rest of your stuff into the base." Ding-*ge* closed the folder. "The rest can wait until after management sets up the official announcement. In a few days, you'll have to go take an official photograph. Your team uniform is already being made, it'll probably get here tomorrow. And Weibo...

generally we don't interfere with players posting about their daily lives on Weibo, but you should still restrain yourself a little. With those fans, don't always…"

"I got it." Jian Rong said, "Relax, I won't pay any fines because of them."

With that, Ding-*ge* finally stopped badgering him about it.

He briefed him on a few more things before he opened the door to the meeting room. TTC's other members were all sitting on a sofa in the living room.

Seeing them come out, Lu Boyuan looked up. "Done signing?"

Ding-*ge* said, "En."

"So we'll be teammates from now on?" Xiao Bai slouched, one leg hiked over the other, and asked, "Then, per tradition tonight?"

Ding-*ge* glanced at the time and said, "Sure, I'll go make a reservation. A little later should be fine, right? I feel more at ease if there's less customers."

Jian Rong asked, "What tradition?"

"What else?" Xiao Bai said, "Of course, it's to go celebrate! Training is about to begin anyway, so we should first go and eat a good meal beforehand!"

Ding-*ge* had already dialed the restaurant phone number when he thought of asking for the opinion of the person in question. "It's a hot pot place we often go to. The food is pretty fresh, and there are private rooms, not dirty. Is it okay?"

Ding-*ge* was already calling them, what else could Jian Rong say. He nodded. “Anything works.”

Jian Rong went upstairs and changed his clothes. He could no longer remember how long it had been since he last wore a jacket. Ever since he entered TTC’s front door, he had never left.

Before leaving his room, Jian Rong hesitated briefly before still taking off his hat and hanging it back on its hook.

Wearing a merch hat in front of the person himself… was very odd.

When Jian Rong walked out of his room, he just happened to run into Lu Boyuan, who was exiting the room opposite his.

Every member of TTC was able to shoulder the title of “esports celebrity.” Their level of fame among young people was even higher than the popularity of some celebrities, so they all wore masks and hats when going outside.

Out of habit, Lu Boyuan had pulled the brim of his hat down very low. Upon hearing a noise, he lifted his head slightly.

“It’s 7 degrees[2] outside.” Lu Boyuan said.

Jian Rong’s footsteps froze. “What?”

Lu Boyuan looked at the thin coat he was wearing and said, “You’ll be cold wearing that, go change into another one.”

Jian Rong shook his head. “It’s fine.”

“We’re about to start training.” Lu Boyuan said, “Getting sick will affect your condition.”

Jian Rong tugged at his hair and said, after a beat of silence, “…I don’t have any other jackets.”

When he came to the base, the temperature wasn’t quite as low yet, so he only brought one jacket over.

Lu Boyuan assessed his figure before he turned around and went back inside his room. “Wait here.”

Lu Boyuan hadn’t closed his door, and Jian Rong subconsciously peeked into his room.

Even though they were living in opposite rooms, the structure of the rooms was completely different. Lu Boyuan’s room was clearly a little bigger, and he had more furniture than Jian Rong did as well.

Lu Boyuan came out soon after, carrying a gray jacket and a white baseball hat.

“This coat is from a few years ago. It’s been washed and was placed in a garment bag the entire time…” Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. “You don’t mind, do you?”

“I don’t mind.” Jian Rong said, “But the one I’m wearing now…” Is fine.

Before he could finish his sentence, a baseball hat appeared on top of his head.

“It’s been cold these past few days, and it might snow tonight.” Lu Boyuan said, “Wear it.”

Jian Rong swallowed and reached out to pinch the brim of the hat. He wanted to say that he didn’t need it, he had his own hat.

But when the words got to his mouth, he suddenly didn’t really feel like saying it anymore.

“*Ge*!” Xiao Bai heard Lu Boyuan’s voice and shouted up the stairs. “Are you ready? Ding-*ge* is already waiting in the car. Can you hurry up Jian Rong while you’re at it—”

“Ready.” After Lu Boyuan answered him, he looked back at Jian Rong and said, “Go change your jacket. Make sure to zip it up.”

Lu Boyuan was much taller and broader than Jian Rong. Even if it was clothing a few years old, it was still quite loose on Jian Rong.

The hem of the jacket was almost long enough to cover his butt, and the sleeves could also effortlessly envelop his hands. Even the pockets were big, and it felt very comfy to stuff his hands inside of them.

Jian Rong looked down, wondering if he should always buy jackets a size up from now on, before he quickly got in the black van waiting by the front door.

Everyone else was already waiting in the van. For convenience’s sake, the people who got on first sat in the back row. Out of the two individual seats in the middle row, one was empty and one was occupied by Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan was sitting leisurely, his long legs sprawled out casually, and he was playing on his phone.

Detecting movement, he raised his head and glanced at Jian Rong, as if confirming whether or not Jian Rong was properly wearing the jacket, before he swiftly looked away again.

Jian Rong ducked his head and silently sat in the empty seat.

The others were playing on their phones, so he also took out his phone and browsed through Weibo randomly. The replies on that comment from before had already argued their way into the nine hundreds, and seeing that number, Jian Rong decided it would be better to just not click on it and make himself feel annoyed.

The hot pot restaurant wasn't far from the base. Since today was a weekday, and it was evening, there weren't that many people in the store.

After parking, the six of them walked towards the restaurant.

En route, Xiao Bai made a noise of surprise. "Jian Rong, you aren't wearing my *ge*'s merch hat today?"

Hearing that, everyone else looked at him too.

Jian Rong: "…"

With a stiff expression, he thought, if he had known someone would bring it up even if he didn't put it on, he might as well have just worn it.

“Also, isn’t your jacket a bit too big?” Yuan Qian laughed and poked fun at him. “Did your dad pass it down to you?”

Jian Rong: “…no.”

Lu Boyuan said, “It’s mine.”

Everyone was startled for a moment, before they turned away and laughed even more uproariously.

The private room for an open-air-type hot pot restaurant was fairly simple; it was basically a little empty square room. The only things inside were a table and a wooden cupboard containing bowls and chopsticks.

After Jian Rong took off his coat and hung it on the back of his seat, he saw Lu Boyuan pull out the chair next to his and sit down very naturally.

Men always went overboard when ordering food, only stopping when dishes filled their entire table. Yuan Qian then turned and asked, “Ding-*ge*, can we order some alcohol?”

“You can right now, but don’t touch it after we start training in a few days.” Ding-*ge* said, “Though don’t drink too much…”

Yuan Qian gestured with his hand. “Two bottles of *baijiu*!”

Ding-*ge*: “…”

It had been a very long time since Jian Rong last shared a meal with so many people at the table.

During the break period, every member of TTC had different working and resting hours. For the most part, everyone ate in front of their computers as well. If it weren't for the auntie at the base, there would probably be a layer of dust on top of the dining table.

Once the *baijiu* arrived, Xiao Bai poured a cup and placed it in front of Jian Rong.

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of talking to Ding-*ge*. He spotted the cup of alcohol from the corner of his eyes and told Xiao Bai, "Don't give it to him."

Yuan Qian waved a hand. "Just a little bit is fine."

Pine raised an eyebrow. "Not necessarily. Last time, didn't someone only take two sips before rushing out of the store, insisting that he had to go to the swimming pool next door to play basketball?"

"……P-baby, I've improved a lot now! I won't get drunk again!" As Xiao Bai spoke, he took back the liquor in front of Jian Rong. "Never mind, you're still young, it's good if you don't drink."

Xiao Bai's inadvertent statement successfully attacked the underage teenage boy's ego.

"It doesn't matter." Jian Rong took the cup back from him. "I can drink."

Xiao Bai said, "*Aiya*, children shouldn't try to show off."

Hearing that, Jian Rong picked up the cup and knocked it back in one go.

Xiao Bai: "…"

Jian Rong said, “Pour me another cup, thanks.”

Taking advantage of Xiao Bai turning away to go pour the alcohol, Jian Rong lowered his head and grimaced firmly underneath the brim of his hat.

So unpleasant to drink.

Why did it taste so much worse than beer.

It also really burned. Just then, he almost wasn’t able to keep a straight face…

With alcohol, the food didn’t seem to be that important anymore.

“Come on.” Xiao Bai was the first to lift his cup. “Congratulations to Jian Rong for officially joining TTC, a toast to you!”

Everyone raised their glasses, with Ding-*ge* substituting water for alcohol. He explained, “I’m driving.”

There wasn’t much liquor in Lu Boyuan’s cup. He drank with everyone else before he shook his head and refused a refill.

The taste of the alcohol stung too much. Yuan Qian crinkled his brows and asked, “Jian Rong, how old were you when you started playing LoL?”

Jian Rong: “I forgot, probably in primary school.”

“About the same as me.” Yuan Qian leaned back and sighed. “But my circumstances back then weren’t as good as yours. At that time, I kept playing in illegal internet cafes, bearing the risk of being exposed by my

parents… tsk, this makes it sound like we're from two different generations. It isn't easy for us to have become teammates. Here, another toast."

Xiao Bai asked, "Why did you start streaming afterwards?"

Jian Rong wiped his mouth. "Short of money."

Xiao Bai mulled it over. "Even so, you shouldn't have turned to streaming. It's not like you can make much money when you first start streaming, wouldn't you have been better off working part-time and getting some quick cash?"

"Things were pretty strict back then, a lot of places weren't hiring child labor." Jian Rong spoke casually. "I happened to have a computer at home, zero cost, so I decided to stream."

After drinking alcohol, Jian Rong clearly became more talkative.

Pine glanced at his hair. "Why did you dye your hair like that?"

Jian Rong raised his glass towards Yuan Qian before he drank another half. At Pine's question, he subconsciously ruffled his hair. "Lost a PK[3] with another streamer, and this was the punishment."

Everyone else: "……"

Lu Boyuan lifted a brow. "PK?"

Jian Rong gave an "en." "Betting on gifts. The winner was whoever would receive more, and the loser would be given a random punishment drawn

from the platform's provided punishment cards. I drew dyeing my hair blue."

"...so tragic." Xiao Bai took pity on him and asked, "Then what about the winner? What's the prize?"

Jian Rong: "It's also a random reward, probably one of the platform's big gifts."

Pine: "Probably?"

With a wooden expression, Jian Rong was silent for a while before he said, "I've never won before. The water friends in my livestream room were all sending gifts to the other side."

Xiao Bai cackled until the waiter came in and told them to lower their volume.

Lu Boyuan also laughed. "How long was the punishment? Not going to dye it back?"

"One week." Jian Rong rubbed his face. "At first, I didn't want to spend money to dye it back, but later on that group of dumb... that group of water friends said that my hair color made me more eye-catching on the homepage's recommendation section. Plus I got used to seeing it too, so I just let it be."

Dyeing his hair like this in order to attract customers...

Xiao Bai instantly felt deep respect for Jian Rong, and he lifted his glass. “Incredible.”

Jian Rong raised an eyebrow before he picked up his cup and clinked it against Xiao Bai’s.

Lu Boyuan reached out, wanting to block him, but he was stopped by Ding-*ge*.

“Just let them drink. It’s a rare opportunity, and they can also use it to get a little closer to each other.” He said quietly, “Such a small amount of alcohol won’t cause much trouble anyway.”

Lu Boyuan let out an “en,” but when Jian Rong turned to talk to Xiao Bai, he still furtively poured out half of the alcohol in Jian Rong’s cup.

After finishing the alcohol, they were also pretty much done with the food on the table.

The aftereffects of the alcohol gradually crept up, and each drunkard was in a different state.

Yuan Qian started to talk about Kan in a booming voice, saying that Kan wasn’t human to screw with them like this after so many years of being good bros.

Xiao Bai leaned against Pine’s shoulder, resting with his eyes closed. When Yuan Qian got to the important points, he still slowly nodded his head to indicate his agreement.

Pine didn't knock Xiao Bai off of his shoulder, which meant that he was also quite drunk.

Among them, only Jian Rong was the most normal.

He was propped up on an elbow, one hand holding up his head as he calmly watched Yuan Qian go crazy.

If it weren't for his extremely red cheeks, nobody would be able to tell that he had just consumed alcohol.

After a moment, Jian Rong got up and walked unhurriedly towards the door. "I'm going to the bathroom."

A few steps later, there was a bang, and he ran into the door's handle.

Ding-*ge*: "Are you okay?? How about I help you walk over?"

Jian Rong painfully massaged his thigh. "It's okay, I'm fine, I can go by myself."

Although this restaurant didn't have great decor, its bathroom was still relatively clean.

After relieving himself, Jian Rong felt like the world became quite a bit more wonderful. He stood there, out of it; there seemed to be overlapping images even when he was just looking at the wall in front of him.

He only took a step back once his stomach felt a little more comfortable, bowing his head so that he could button his pants.

When Lu Boyuan entered the bathroom to search for him, what he saw was Jian Rong's drooping head as he fiddled around with his pants, his eyebrows knitted tightly together.

Lu Boyuan asked, "What's wrong?"

"Pants zipper." Jian Rong's head was whirling, and he couldn't tell who the newcomer was. "Can't zip it."

Lu Boyuan: "..."

Jian Rong struggled with it for another ten seconds until he felt his fingers ache. He let go, discouraged, deciding to deal with it later once he was more sober.

Whoosh.

The person in front of him reached out and helped him pull up his zipper.

Translation Notes

1. *Approximately $1,500 – $3,000* ^
2. *7 degrees Celsius = 45 degrees Fahrenheit* ^
3. *Player killing, but used in this case to refer to a bet* ^

Buy me a coffee

ICDI Chapter 24: So it turns out that the dumbass was me.

Thanks to Anonymous for the Ko-fi!

After Jian Rong consecutively bumped into the wall a few times, Lu Boyuan helped him wash his hands and rinse his face before walking him out of the bathroom.

The person in his arms was very light, and Lu Boyuan could hold him with just one hand.

Jian Rong was already a little bit unable to see where he was going clearly. His head ached to the point that he couldn't help but groan a few times.

"Feeling bad?" Lu Boyuan asked.

"No." Jian Rong obstinately refused to admit it before he said again, "...my pants zipper is still undone."

He wanted to steady himself once more and pull up his pants zipper, but as a result, his body tilted to the side and he knocked shoulders with someone passing by.

After being inexplicably knocked into, the person could smell the alcohol fumes, and he scowled, instantly wanting to curse, "You fucker..."

Even drunk, Jian Rong wasn't willing to admit defeat, and he preemptively struck first. "You're cursing who?"

He was unwilling, that was true, but his voice was soft, completely lacking the confidence to back it up.

The person froze when he saw Jian Rong's face, and he immediately glanced up at his hair before freezing again.

Lu Boyuan gripped Jian Rong's face and turned his head back towards him.

Ding-*ge* had already gone to pay the bill, and he had told Lu Boyuan to leave after getting Jian Rong, so right now Lu Boyuan was wearing both his mask and his hat.

He said mildly, "He's drunk, sorry."

After that, he supported Jian Rong and swiftly left.

The person behind him continued to stand in the same place, his expression shocked. A few seconds later, he finally gathered his wits again, and he fished out his phone and took a burst of photos of the figures in front of him!

Late at night, the dad fans of "SoftBar" had their legs propped up, cigarettes lit, as they reminisced on Tieba about the past, when they used to get into rows and trade insults with their son, those good old simple days.

A forum post stealthily appeared on the homepage—

The title: [Holy sh*t I saw the actual person at a hot pot restaurant!!!]

The content: [[photo] [photo] I didn't have time to take a picture of his face! But it was definitely, definitely him. Look at that figure from behind,

that hair, that height and build… everyone should be able to recognize him, right?]

[1L[1]: Fuck, is he from the dwarf kingdom? Who's the one supporting him, his real dad?]

[OP: Doesn't look like it, he seemed fairly young.]

[32L: Did he get beaten up? Being carried away like that by someone else?]

[OP: Drunk. He seemed to be even thinner than before, judging from his face. It felt like he didn't really have much energy overall.]

[158L: This dumbass got led astray at such a young age and ran out to get drunk??]

[266L: Damn, why's this dumbass getting by so miserably? Is it impossible for him to make a living without Dad's gifts? So immature… does anyone know his Alipay?]

[268L: How much longer until he can start working again? He won't starve to death before then, right?]

[399L: Shiliu started streaming, he's close with the little dumbass. Let's go and ask him, bros.]

Once they returned to the base, Lu Boyuan supported Jian Rong on his way back to his room.

Jian Rong had fallen asleep in the car. Lu Boyuan had just helped him out of his jacket when the phone in Jian Rong's pocket suddenly rang.

After it rang continuously a few times, Lu Boyuan picked up the call, worried that it was about something serious.

“Why did you only pick up the phone now?” The person on the other side said urgently, “Where are you currently? I heard that—”

“He’s asleep,” Lu Boyuan said, lowering his voice.

As soon as he said that, someone tugged on his clothing once before gripping the fabric and refusing to let go.

Jian Rong’s eyes were shut, and he murmured, “My pants zipper… isn’t zipped…”

“It is zipped,” Lu Boyuan coaxed him, not wanting to argue with a drunkard. He then told the person on the phone, “If you need anything, call again tomorrow.”

The call ended. Shiliu blankly held his phone, which had been on speaker mode, and stared at his livestream, where Soft’s water friends were frantically spamming question marks. After a long time, he finally found his voice again—

“No… I don’t know who that was either, but his voice sounded really familiar for some reason…

“There’s no way that was his dad. He doesn’t have any older brothers either.

“No no no! Soft isn’t gay, he really isn’t! What kind of nonsense?

“You’re the one who has a messed up private life, your entire family’s private life is messed up!”

…

The next day.

When Jian Rong woke up, he had a splitting headache.

He buried his head in his pillow, emptying his mind for a moment, before he fumbled around on the nightstand and managed to grab his phone with difficulty.

And then, he saw the messages taking up his entire screen.

Most of them were from Shiliu, the words packed densely together. He felt a little too lazy to read them, so he first clicked on the Tieba link that Shiliu had sent over.

Immediately once the page loaded, he saw a picture.

The picture was a little blurry, and he had to narrow his eyes in order to see it clearly.

After discerning the content, Jian Rong laughed.

The picture was of two people from the back. The one on the left was already thoroughly wasted, and he was basically being lifted by the other person to walk away. His head nearly drooped to the ground, and his legs were completely unsteady. From this angle, the only thing Jian Rong could make out was the tall back collar of the other person’s jacket.

Such a dumbass.

He scrolled down. The next picture was somewhat similar to the one above it; the only difference was that the person on the left had lifted up his head slightly, exposing his blue hair.

Jian Rong's smile froze.

Ah?

Oh.

So it turns out that the dumbass was me.

He maintained his rigid smile and went to go identify the person on the right.

...he didn't need to fucking identify him at all.

Jian Rong's smile vanished completely, and he didn't even move to pick up his phone after it slid down onto the pillow.

He stubbornly stared off into the distance, his face filled with dread as he started to earnestly recall what happened yesterday.

A *'whoosh—'* suddenly flashed through Jian Rong's mind.

Sharp and crisp, fast and speedy, accompanied by a bit of an echo specific to a bathroom.

Closely after, a pair of slender hands appeared in his memories. There was a mole on the web between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand.

That hand slowly reached towards his bottom half, and then, it helped him pull up his pants zipper.

Jian Rong: "……"

Pull up, his pants zipper?

Jian Rong took a deep breath and thought back over it again in disbelief.

A long while later, Jian Rong got out of bed, his expression grave. Enduring his headache, he pulled out the contract that he had just signed yesterday from his cupboard and glanced at the fee for breaking the contract.

Ones, tens, hundreds, thousands, ten thousands…

Eight figures.

Jian Rong closed his eyes in despair.

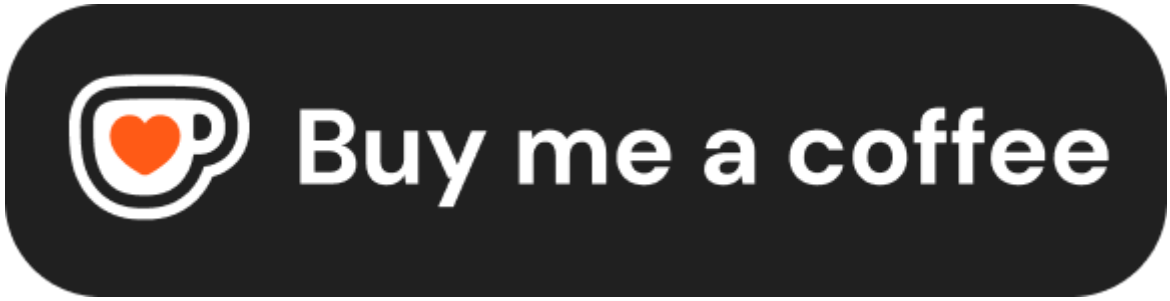
…dammit, he couldn't afford it.

Translation Notes

1. *The replies on Chinese social media sites are generally referred to as 'buildings' and each reply is a 'level' (thus far I've been translating them just as replies so it's easier to understand). 1L refers to the first person to comment, so the first 'level' or floor* ^

Yan: Very short chapter, but I think this is the shortest it gets! A very funny chapter though, hahaha Jian Rong digging a pit for himself never gets old.

Wei: Aw, Soft's dad fans really do care ;') rip Soft though taking some big L's



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ICDI Chapter 25: Those are the freaking hands that have held countless trophies before.

His escape thwarted, Jian Rong sat cross-legged at the head of his bed, staring anxiously at the jacket lying next to him.

The “borrowed” jacket was now thoroughly wrinkled, and it was obvious that he had tossed it around quite a bit yesterday. Jian Rong picked it up and sniffed it, getting a whiff of an alcoholic stench.

He took note of the clothing brand and decided that it would be better just to buy a new one.

After hanging up the jacket properly, Jian Rong started to read through the messages that Shiliu sent him.

Every few texts, he had to take a moment for a breather.

[Shiliu: How come all your water friends are here in my livestream?]

[Shiliu: What’s going on, they said you’re getting drunk…]

[“Voice call missed”]

[Shiliu: It’s over, that phone call was on speaker just now!]

[Shiliu: Who picked up the phone, where are you, are you okay]

After reading through the dozen or so messages, Jian Rong raked a hand through his hair and replied.

[R-ong: I’m fine]

A few seconds later, he couldn’t help but send another text.

[R-ong: What did the person who answered the phone yesterday say…]

[Shiliu: What he said wasn’t important, the main issue was you.]

Jian Rong’s scalp prickled, and he quickly typed: *Enough, you don’t need to tell me…*

[Shiliu: You kept trying to make him help you zip up your pants]

[Shiliu: Those dads of yours are also weirdly good at creating mental associations. Now they’re all saying you’re an unfilial son, liking men but not letting your family know, haha]

Jian Rong couldn’t laugh at all.

[Shiliu: Are you really okay? How about we duo Q and talk using the team voice chat? You can turn on your mic and calm your fans down. The platform won’t care if you slip through this loophole.]

Shiliu was Jian Rong’s closest friend during these past few years.

They had become acquainted through LoL, and Jian Rong had played with him for a few days. At that time, Shiliu was already extremely popular. After finding out that Jian Rong was a new streamer, Shiliu had helped spread the word a little and had often invited him to duo queue together.

It could be said that the reason Jian Rong's streaming career got off to a good start had a lot to do with Shiliu. So even though Jian Rong's popularity grew higher and higher later, he still duo queued with Shiliu all the time, and if Shiliu didn't come then he would only solo queue for the most part. When other streamers contacted him, wanting to hype some streamer CP with him, Jian Rong basically rejected them all.

The contract was already signed, and Jian Rong didn't plan on hiding it. He held down the voice message button. "I signed a professional contract with an esports club for the next season. Before the official announcement comes out, management isn't allowing me to say anything yet… in short, nothing's wrong, no need to worry. I'll treat you to a meal in a few days."

Then Shiliu bombarded him with messages once more.

After Jian Rong finished chatting with him, he decided to take a shower.

When he was taking off his pants, those hands resurfaced in his memory, and he couldn't help but knock his head against the wall again.

Those are the freaking hands that have held countless trophies before.

What right does your crappy pants zipper have……

After a very long shower, the phone on the desk lit up again with notifications from that "TTC's Fierce Men Workout Club" group chat.

[P-Baby's Little Support: @everyone it's already 3 pm, still not awake? Ding-*ge* brought food back, it's all congee. Come down and eat.]

[Pine: Change your nickname.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: No, I think this nickname is very cute.]

Jian Rong was about to reply that he wasn't going to eat.

[Da Qian: @R-ong @R how come you guys haven't come down yet?]

[R: Coming]

[Ding-*ge*: Go and let Jian Rong know on your way down, the congee won't taste good after it gets cold]

[R-ong: No need I'll be down soon]

TTC's members finally used the dining table today.

They sat around the table eating congee. Because of their hangovers, everyone was in low spirits.

Ding-*ge* felt his head hurt just thinking about their intoxicated appearances from last night. "I let you all drink a little to liven things up, not so that you guys could get wasted! Do you not know how much you can drink? I only went out to take a call for ten minutes, and when I got back everyone had collapsed, ridiculous. And you guys kept pouring alcohol for Jian Rong! He's only seventeen and still growing, he'll reach his limit after just one or two cups…"

Yuan Qian instantly took responsibility. "It's my fault, I won't let them drink *baijiu* anymore in the future."

Jian Rong had changed into a black sweatshirt, and he walked downstairs, head lowered, hands crammed into the hoodie pocket. He attempted to silently take a seat at the table without rousing the other people's attention.

"Jian Rong!" Xiao Bai unleashed a loud voice. "Do you feel better now?"

Everyone around the table stopped talking and looked over.

Jian Rong met Lu Boyuan's eyes the moment he lifted his head.

Lu Boyuan appeared the same as usual, with no obvious emotions in his gaze.

Jian Rong's heart had just calmed down when he saw the other person abruptly lower his line of vision and glance at Jian Rong's pants.

Jian Rong: "……"

The back of his head went numb, and with stiff lips, he squeezed out an "en" as a response. Evading Lu Boyuan's line of sight, he walked towards the seat farthest from Lu Boyuan.

"Come sit here, it's easier to scoop the congee." Yuan Qian stopped him and considerately helped him pull out the chair.

To the left of that seat was Yuan Qian, and to the right was Lu Boyuan.

Jian Rong stared blankly at the chair for a few seconds before rigidly sitting down in it.

“Dove congee or century egg and pork congee, serve yourself whichever one you want to eat.” Yuan Qian said, “Nothing’s wrong, right? You seemed pretty drunk.”

Jian Rong shook his head. “I’m fine.”

“You scared me to death yesterday.” Xiao Bai drank the congee and said indistinctly, “You couldn’t even walk. My *ge* had to pick you up entirely in order to drag you along.”

“It wasn’t that excessive.” Lu Boyuan said.

Jian Rong suppressed the urge to give Xiao Bai a beating. He forced himself to tilt his head over and say, “Thank you.”

“My *ge* was also the one who carried you upstairs, starting and stopping like a penguin, and you kept harping on about something.” Xiao Bai continued to describe the scene before he asked, “Do you still remember?”

“…I don’t remember.” Jian Rong raised his head and asked coldly, “Weren’t you drunk too? Why do you still have so much energy?”

For some reason, even though Jian Rong’s tone of voice was clearly flat and there wasn’t anything particularly wrong with what he was asking, Xiao Bai felt as if he was actually implying “*why didn’t you just die from alcohol poisoning last night*.”

Xiao Bai: “…I wasn’t drunk at the time, just tipsy.”

Jian Rong was about to say something else, but then the person next to him suddenly stood up. The chair made a very faint scraping noise against the floor.

Jian Rong immediately shut up and continued to eat his congee without lifting his head, trying his best to separate himself from the rest of the dining table.

He heard Lu Boyuan walk into the kitchen before there came the sound of the refrigerator opening and closing. After a moment, Lu Boyuan made his way back to his seat again and bumped into Jian Rong's arm slightly upon sitting down.

"When's the interview that you mentioned before?" Lu Boyuan's voice was warm and deep.

A sentence suddenly floated across Jian Rong's mind—"*It is zipped*."

He buried his head even lower.

Ding-*ge* said, "The day after tomorrow, in the afternoon. They'll arrange for someone to come by and conduct the interview."

Lu Boyuan made a noise of agreement before he unscrewed the cap of the iced coffee and drank a mouthful. He placed the other cup of room temperature milk on the table and pushed it towards the person next to him very naturally. "Drink this after you finish eating."

Jian Rong almost choked on the congee. "...okay."

After Ding-*ge* finished discussing the interview with Lu Boyuan, he cleared his throat. "Also, Jian Rong… did you know that you were photographed last night?"

"Yeah." Jian Rong asked, "Were the rules violated?"

"No… don't worry, it's not that important. The only thing is that it's best if you don't drink while underage. I completely forgot about that last night." Ding-*ge* said, "However, I saw that they didn't manage to photograph your face either, so if someone asks about it in the future, you can just deny it."

Once breakfast was over, Ding-*ge* placed a ban on alcohol and forbade everyone from touching it before the spring season was finished.

Upon returning to the practice room, Jian Rong found several sets of the team uniform lying on his table.

TTC's team uniform had a black and white design, with a white logo on a black background. Many sponsor logos were printed on top, and "*TTC*" was written across the chest area. The team's crown symbol was on the back of the uniform.

Below "*TTC*" was a line of tiny letters: "*Soft*."

Jian Rong stared at his own ID for a long time before moving.

The uniform material was excellent, and he stuck his hands in the pockets and felt around a little before starting to pull them out.

“Try it on at night. If it doesn’t fit, it can be altered.” A voice suddenly came from behind him.

Jian Rong withdrew his hands. “…okay.”

Lu Boyuan spoke again. “Someone called you last night. I was worried it was about something important, so I answered it.”

“I know.” Realizing that he couldn’t continue feigning memory loss, Jian Rong rubbed the tip of his nose. “…I got your jacket dirty, but I can buy a new one to give back to you, is that alright?”

“It’s fine. The jacket was a size too small, so I didn’t wear it all that much.” Lu Boyuan thought of something and broke out into laughter. “Although, it’s custom-made and my name is sewn on it… if you mind, then just toss it. If not, you can keep it and wear it around the base. Up to you.”

Right after he said that, the door to the practice room was pushed open.

Xiao Bai stretched and walked inside. When he saw that Lu Boyuan was still standing there, he shot a puzzled glance at the clock hanging on the wall. “*Ge*, didn’t you say that you were streaming today at 4:30?”

Lu Boyuan gave an “en” and returned to his own seat before turning on the computer.

Jian Rong snapped out of his daze. He was about to put away the uniform, but Xiao Bai picked it up before he could do so.

“Wah, this—” Xiao Bai looked at the material in his hands before he turned to Jian Rong next to him. “Your clothing size is this small??”

Jian Rong expressionlessly snatched the clothing back before he stuffed it into the bag. “Mn, but my fists are very big, do you want to see?”

Xiao Bai: “…no thanks.”

As soon as Jian Rong logged into the game, Xiao Bai scooted over to boot-lick. “Quick quick quick, get on your side account and take me flying, I’m on my Diamond 2 promo series now!”

At that current moment, Jian Rong would rather see him instantly plummet straight down into Platinum.

He was about to refuse Xiao Bai when an invite suddenly popped up in his game.

[TTC · Road has invited you to join the party.]

Jian Rong gave a start, and he subconsciously looked over.

Lu Boyuan had already started streaming. Jian Rong saw him click on a certain friend’s chat box and start typing in it.

Soon after, an in-game sound effect came through Jian Rong’s headphones —

[TTC · Road: Carry me?]

Less than a second after the message was sent out, Jian Rong had already joined the party.

Lu Boyuan chuckled and lazily greeted the fans in his livestream room. Then he shifted his fingers and changed the livestream name to [Soft carrying up the ranks].

“I’ll start it?” he asked through the game voice chat.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Okay.]

They swiftly matched into a game. Upon seeing the role that he got assigned, Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow in surprise.

Neither of them got the roles that they wanted this game. Jian Rong was support, and Lu Boyuan was ADC.

He was pondering over which champion to play when a bunch of messages jumped up in the chat—

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: !!!]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: God Lu is that you QAQ!]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: God Lu notice me!!]

Jian Rong pursed his lips and couldn’t help but take a peek at the livestream pulled up on his phone.

Lu Boyuan was scrolling through the champion list and didn’t seem like he intended to respond.

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: Is #4 there?]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: Calling #4 big brother~]

It took a few seconds for Jian Rong to realize that he was #4.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: ?]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: Can we switch roles? I'm mid.]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: Please please >.<]

Usually, Jian Rong would've definitely switched without any objections.

He didn't say anything, but Peach Jam continued to talk in the chat.

Jian Rong tugged at his hair and couldn't resist sending a private message, asking: [Should I switch?]

Lu Boyuan swept a glance over the barrage. Jian Rong's fans had arrived on the scene, as always, and it was extremely easy to spot their rough style mixed among the comments.

[What kind of crap are you asking? Didn't you say you would rather be a Rift Scuttler than play support??]

[Things didn't end well for the last few ADCs who he played support for. My recommendation is for God Lu to immediately leave the game.]

[Did the little dumbass injure his brain from drinking? Do you mind sobering up a bit, nobody in this game deserves to have you play support for them!!]

Lu Boyuan looked away from the barrage and said, “Your choice.”

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: #4 big brother answer me~!]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: Switching or not!!]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: God Lu, could you make some room for me on your friends list…]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Not switching]

A row of question marks swept past the barrage.

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: Why…]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: God Lu, I sent you gifts, do you mind saying the gift thanks out loud (lowly.jpg)]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: #4 big brother, is it okay if I buy the support position? Send me your ZFB[1], I can transfer you the money?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Send me your ZFB, I can transfer you the money, can you be a bit quieter then?]

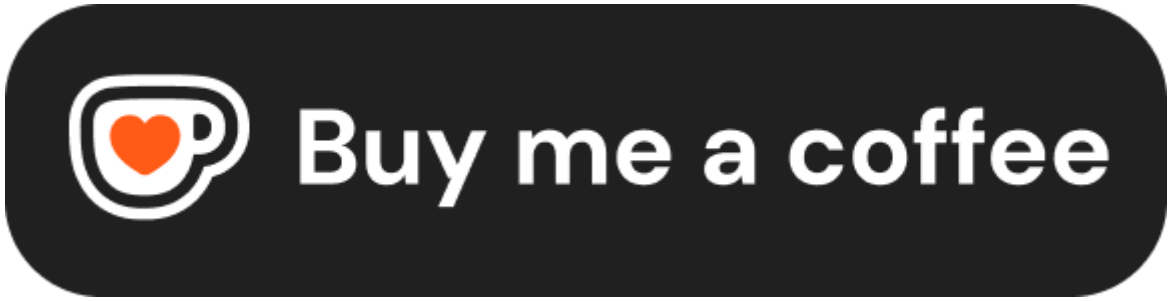
Lu Boyuan chose his champion, and he couldn’t help but cast his gaze downwards and laugh.

Translation Notes

1. *ZFB = zhifubao, Alipay* ^

Yan: Lol in games I'm Jian Rong, I never play support, it's dps or die in this house (dps and die)

Wei: Hahaha Jian Rong regretting his life decisions rip :') LBY and Xiao Bai are both not helping lmao



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ICDI Chapter 26: TTC Weibo's formal announcement.

Bonus Ko-fi chapter! Thank you to Aria, pickle, and impatientlywaiting for the support! New Ko-fi goal has been refreshed

---

Jian Rong rarely played support for other people.

One reason was because he felt like it was too oppressive playing support, and he couldn't get any kills. The second reason was that he didn't have good luck, and most of the ADCs he encountered in solo queue could infuriate him to the point that he had to pace ten circles around the room while throwing punches at the air.

The last time he had played support, it had been for that weirdo couple, and the ADC hadn't received a single heal from him starting mid game.

The time before that, Jian Rong had played a damage dealer support, and the ADC hadn't gotten a single kill.

The time before *that*…

In summary, his livestream's water friends weren't wrong. The people who were his ADCs never ended up well.

With a "spectator.jpg" attitude, the water friends posted in "SoftBar": [What is the little dumbass thinking, it's not like this is our territory. If he screws over Road, Dad can't out-flame those fans.]

Then, with their very own eyes, they saw Jian Rong take out Lulu, a short, adorable little sorceress sister.

Of this champion's four skills, three were used to protect teammates, and the last one was also a slow. All her dialogue consisted of lines like "*trans~mog~ulate*," "*delightify~*," and *"zippy."*[1]

They had watched Jian Rong play the game for two years, but they had never once seen him use this thing before.

Lu Boyuan was playing Kalista, a champion who was always on the move.

The fans watched him skillfully move about, throwing spears and getting kills, and they filled the barrage with all sorts of glowing praises.

"My ADC is so-so." Lu Boyuan said indifferently, "This is a relatively low division, so it's passable."

[Passable? Husband, aren't you on a massacre right now?]

[God Lu is still low-key. If this was that Lulu next to him, he would already be asking "who can stop your dad" by now]

[So God Lu, are you retiring or not ah, can you give a clear answer… I've been worrying about it for so many days now, I'm really super sad QAQ]

[Dumbass bluenette buying support items that shield allies… end of Grandpa's youth.]

[Injured his brain drinking, suggest seeing a doctor promptly, hope everything is fine.]

Lu Boyuan glanced at the barrage and answered the fans directly for the first time, “I won’t be retiring this year.”

The barrage instantly exploded; the comments were packed densely together, and it was hard to clearly make out a single one.

That Peach Jam was playing the Lady of Luminosity, Lux.

She hadn’t really quieted down after entering the game and continued to constantly spam the chat. Ever since she found out that she had matched into a game with Road, she acted as if she were playing on social media rather than playing a game.

Jian Rong watched her send out message after message. At the beginning, she was still using “God Lu,” but now it had become “Lu.”

He exhaled and pressed his lips together tightly as he purchased items.

The seventh time Peach Jam came to the bot lane, Lu Boyuan finally responded to her once.

[TTC · Road: No need to come to bot.]

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: Oh T.T]

After they cleared the bot lane, they went to the mid lane together to team fight.

[Love To Eat Peach Jam: Lu~ you can have the blue buff, I don’t need it~]

[TTC · Road: Thanks]

Jian Rong expressionlessly turned around and started running towards the bottom jungle, intending to place a ward to provide vision.

“Lulu.” Lu Boyuan suddenly called out to him. “Come here.”

Jian Rong froze, swiveled around, and caught up with him.

Lu Boyuan attacked the blue buff down to low health before he said, “Take it.”

Jian Rong’s hands worked faster than his brain, and he took the blue buff with one hit.

Peach Jam cautiously typed out a “?” in the chat.

The barrage was also full of “?”.

[Why give support Lulu the blue buff?]

[God Lu, you’ve got it all wrong. Peach Jam is the girl, this Lulu is that dumbass son of mine.]

[I’ve seen a pair of sweethearts use this maneuver before. And then I was so disgusted by them in that game that I ended up AFKing.]

Lu Boyuan said, “Let’s go to the top lane and get kills.”

Jian Rong collected his thoughts and obediently followed after him, Lulu’s little sorceress character bobbing up and down as she walked. Jian Rong kept feeling as if this champion was much nicer to look at now than before.

They won that game without much difficulty. Lu Boyuan left the postgame lobby and was about to start a new match when a few messages from an in-game friend suddenly popped up.

[PUD, XIU: That very well-behaved kid you were talking about, I know who it is now. Is it that one who just came of age not long ago?]

[PUD, XIU: Has the kid already moved in with you? How are you all getting along?]

There wasn't anything particularly wrong with those statements from an insider's point of view.

But to the crowd of observers, each and every word equalled a bone to pick —

[What's going on? Husband, you're dating?!]

[Oh damn, just came of age? Worse than a beast!]

[Above, are you crazy, Road's only 23 this year, is there something wrong with dating an 18 year old?]

[Who the hell is this lucky to be able to sleep with Lu Boyuan right after coming of age???]

[So it turns out you like the obedient ones TAT]

[No, forget the rest, it's normal for professional players to date. But… can girlfriends move into the base? Will this not fucking affect practice? Not affect the other members? Oh, I forgot that your God Lu is #1 in the LPL,

the other players probably wouldn't dare to say anything even if they got mad.]

[Anti, is something the matter? TTC's base is so huge, how will one extra person living there affect anyone?]

[Even though I also think it isn't right to let a girlfriend move into the base, you're right about one thing. Right now Road is indeed #1 in the LPL.]

Jian Rong was also stunned.

Road had a girlfriend?

And she was going to move into the base? Then… wouldn't she be living in the room opposite his own?

And also, didn't they say that outsiders weren't allowed to stay overnight at the base?

Jian Rong's mood became inexplicably irritated. He raked a hand through his hair, thinking that it definitely must be because that Peach Jam was too noisy just then.

"Not dating." That line suddenly came through his headphones.

Lu Boyuan suspected that XIU knew he was streaming and was purposefully stirring things up. He closed the chat and dragged the game interface to the side to read the barrage.

Then the barrage scrolled by even faster.

Lu Boyuan lowered his gaze. “Spam a little slower, I can’t read them clearly.

“I’m not #1, there is no #1 in the competitive arena.

“Outsiders aren’t allowed to stay overnight at the base.

“Will I retire next year… I’ll talk about next year’s matters next year.”

Jian Rong propped up his elbow, blocking the space between him and Xiao Bai.

After that, he lowered his head and very carefully pressed the “+1” after a “*who’s the very well-behaved kid who’s the very well-behaved kid!!*” comment.

“Who’s the very well-behaved kid…” Lu Boyuan answered very naturally, “Our team’s new mid laner.”

The audience: “?”

The other three people in the practice room: “?”

Jian Rong: “?”

The barrage erupted once again, and Jian Rong felt like it was extremely laggy even on his phone.

Everyone knew that TTC was going to switch mid laners for sure this season, but there hadn’t been any news about it up until now.

Even though Lu Boyuan hadn’t revealed any information from what he said, it was still enough to stir up the fans.

Someone tapped his shoulder, and Jian Rong subconsciously covered his phone screen with his hand before turning his head, calming his heartbeat.

Xiao Bai lowered his voice and questioned, bewildered, “I wasn’t listening closely just now. The well-behaved kid or whatever that my *ge* was talking about… is that you?”

Jian Rong was silent for a few seconds before he asked, “Has the team recruited any other new mid laners? My substitute or something?”

Xiao Bai: “No.”

Jian Rong let out an “oh” and nodded assuredly. “Then it’s me.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

—

That night, Ding-*ge* knocked on Jian Rong’s door and let him know that TTC’s Weibo would be issuing the official announcement tomorrow.

“Originally we wanted to announce it a few days from now,” Ding-*ge* said. “Unexpectedly, Road mentioned it today in the livestream, and it went straight onto the hot search. It’ll be wasted if we don’t use it, so we might as well strike while the iron is hot.”

Jian Rong gave an “en” and asked, “Do I need to do anything?”

“No, when the time comes just repost the club’s Weibo and that’ll be good. I’ve already let them know, and the Weibo verification will show up on your account tomorrow. You’ll have to change your Weibo username too… those

are all trivial matters." Ding-*ge* paused. "But there is one thing I have to emphasize to you again… from now on, you'll officially be a professional player, and you have to keep that in mind before saying or doing anything. Do your best not to make any mistakes in a public space or on social media. This is for your sake too."

Jian Rong pressed his lips together and nodded. "I know, I'm aware of the consequences."

Seeing his earnest, meek appearance, Ding-*ge* was very satisfied, and he patted his shoulder with the air of an elder. "Don't be nervous, I believe you."

Jian Rong wasn't nervous.

He was able to calmly play games and chat in front of several hundred thousand people, so what was there to be nervous about when posting a statement about joining a team.

The only thing was, now that Ding-*ge* mentioned it, it actually reminded him of his main account that he had long forgotten about.

Knowing that there would be staff members accessing his Weibo from now on, Jian Rong logged into his abandoned main account and swiftly canceled his special follow for Lu Boyuan. He then went to read the innumerable comments and reposts.

While moving around, he accidentally glimpsed the number one topic on the hot search—#TTC's Well-Behaved Kid Mid Laner#

"…"

Jian Rong looked away, ears red, and felt a little guilty for some reason.

It had been too long since he last logged into Weibo, and the comments underneath his post about stopping streaming already numbered over ten thousand.

Among the newest comments, there were some saying that they missed him, and there were also some who found their way over from Kan's matchfixing announcement to curse him out. Both sides had begun fighting once more, and they had energetically built up a three hundred story tower.

He finally knew where all those comments came from.

The top comment was still from that crappy fanclub.

[Soft's Only Fanclub 2: Dumb son, Dad misses you]

Jian Rong started typing.

[Soft: Not close, don't miss me]

Only a few seconds after he responded, a dozen or so new replies instantly jumped out—

[You still have the fucking nerve to show up? After being forced to stop streaming, you don't even know to come on here and chat with your dad. What's this unfilial son up to every day? Starved to death yet?]

[Soft: Getting by better than you]

[If you don't have any money, you should find a second job and go be an accompanying player. Dad will buy a thousand hours from you, want you to play support for me]

[Soft: If you swear a blood oath that you won't leave any bad reviews, sure]

[Little dumbass, can your brain be a little more clever? If you're forced to stop streaming, just go freeload off of someone else's livestream ah.]

[Soft: Are you telling me how to do my job?]

Jian Rong was answering casually, but when he lowered his eyes and saw the next comment, his smile immediately froze.

The comment was replying to someone from the argument tower. It wasn't clear what the person that it was answering had said, but this commenter opened up right away with a mini essay:

[Tongtong1234: Got it, your son's a Road fan. It's not strange, the fans reflect the person, after all. The only thing Road knows how to do is act pretentious anyway. On the surface, he doesn't fight over anything, but in private, he directs his crowd of moronic fans to implicate other players and also attack other teams. I bet that TTC not only matchfixes, but also buys their way into the top 4, or else how can they place in the top 4 year after year? All I'm saying is that even though Road's already this garbage, he can still enter the semifinals… just how long is he going to keep clinging on before he's finally willing to retire and give the esports circle some peace and quiet?]

Jian Rong sneered coldly.

[Soft: From what I can see, you're even stranger. In private, you're a dumbass, and on the surface, you're even more of a dumbass. Just how long will it take before a dumbass like you is finally willing to be banned and give the internet some peace and quiet? If you're a pathological liar, then hurry up and go get treatment, don't come under my Weibo and have an episode.]

[Tongtong1234: You fucker]

[Soft: How come you're still not getting lost? Do I have to go get my stick? Did you not see the sign hanging on my Weibo: Tongtong1234 and dogs are not allowed to enter?]

…

The next day, at two in the afternoon. Due to an extreme boredom from the lack of competitions, a portion of esports fans were getting ready to surf Weibo in search of a brawl when they unexpectedly refreshed and found two new Weibo posts—

[TTC Esports Club: Welcome new member @TTC · Soft to TTC's LoL division.

Soft is a strong and powerful new pro player with unlimited potential. He will be challenging next year's spring season with us as the team's starting mid laner.

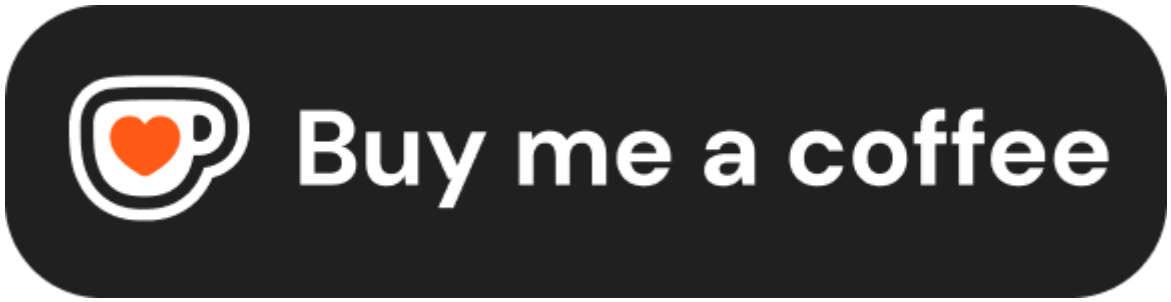
We trust that Soft's addition to the team will bring even more energy and probability. Everyone, please look forward to it! [cute]]

[League of Legends Esports: [Article: The penalty announcement concerning the inappropriate statements made by TTC's Jian Rong (ID: TTC · Soft) on Weibo]]

Translation Notes

1. *I compared Lulu's Chinese and English dialogue and just used the corresponding words... pls appreciate bc I sat there listening to Lulu laugh for like five minutes OTL Although fun fact it sounds lot more meng (cute) in Chinese than it does in English (she sounds kinda like a hyper kid in English LOL)* ^

Wei: Asdfhajdfha Jian Rong my son... off to a great start LOL



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ICDI Chapter 27: I will do my best to prove myself, thanks for the support (post this three minutes later)

There was an earthquake in the esports circle.

The esports fans were all collectively stupefied for ten seconds. Every person who saw the announcement went through the same sequence of events: "screenshot" — "click on TTC · Soft to confirm it was that bluenette" — "click on TTC Esports Club to confirm it was the official Weibo" — "and then freaking repeatedly click on them, unwilling to give up" — "accept reality" — "reply with question marks under the aforementioned Weibo."

In less than ten minutes, TTC's official announcement reached six thousand comments. The top comments in the first five pages were all question marks, and the commenters were all real, active Weibo accounts too. The entertainment circle's water army[1] gasped in amazement and pure astonishment.

Meanwhile, underneath the LPL's penalty post—

[Dumbass, you're worthy of being you.]

[Dumbass, you're worthy of being you.]

…

No Weibo post before had ever caused everyone's responses to be so uniform, not even when idol fans controlled the comments.

Not long after, “TTC · Soft” reposted TTC’s official announcement.

[TTC · Soft: I will do my best to prove myself, thanks for the support (post this three minutes later) //TTC Esports Club: Welcome new member…]

All the spectators: “…”

This Weibo post was edited very quickly.

[TTC · Soft: Thank you for all the support! After joining the team, I’ll definitely practice hard. I won’t let down the fans’ and club’s expectations [heart].]

Since the official post had been drowned out by question marks, all the fans came over to report to Jian Rong’s Weibo after recovering.

[You’re really such a damn unfilial son. Dad just argued for a day and a night with those moronic TTC fans under Kan’s matchfixing Weibo, but now it turns out you fucking voluntarily went to be a hostage???]

[One ‘dumbass, get lost’ is 10k^2 yuan? You must be working part-time for the Discipline Committee, right??]

[Congrats in advance to the LPL’s Discipline Committee getting rich.]

[Did you drug Tank Team’s management? Even someone like you deserves to play competitively??]

[The one who said my son isn’t deserving, I’ve already sent the compilation of Soft solo killing Kan in high ranked games to your PMs, please check that you’ve received it~! XOXO!]

[I think that Soft is a very outstanding player, I'm really looking forward to his performance in TTC (a paid commenter)]

[Feeling sympathetic for TTC fans now.]

[That's not really necessary, if he can enter the team he must have some skill. TTC's boss has always had good foresight. Back then, didn't the boss also spot Road and pull him straight into the starting position? Original veteran Tank fans are already used to this.]

[Just an observation. Did TTC give up because they couldn't snatch my baby Savior? Recruiting even this kind of mid laner… is next year's top 4 gonna become top 16?]

With that comment, TTC's hardcore fans and Soft's livestream water friends, who had once argued with each other for a day and a night underneath Kan's suspension Weibo post, simultaneously appeared.

[PUD fans, have some face. Do you all not know about the incident two years ago when my son won three consecutive games against Savior on the Korean server and easily took 48 points from him? Two years later, your baby Savior shouldn't be as trash anymore right??]

[PUD fans are really so shameless. The reason why TTC doesn't want your baby Savior is definitely because they think the price your baby's charging is way too unreasonable, and he isn't worth it. If your words had the final say concerning next year's achievements, then your PUD would've long since won the championship. Would you even need to come here and be shady?]

A few seconds later, the two of them again—

[How come it's you again, dumbass TTC fan. Don't copy your dad!]

[I commented one second after you, you're saying that I'm copying you? Can Soft's moronic fans quickly get away from *laozi*!]

…

Since all the other teams' fans were currently merrily looking on and reading the comments, a few more topics appeared on the hot search not long after the announcement was posted.

"'TTC's new member Soft,' 'TTC's gone crazy,' 'LoL Esports penalizes Soft,' 'Road called Soft a well-behaved child'… there's also a shocked emoticon after that last topic hahahaha?" Lying on the couch, Xiao Bai nearly laughed himself silly. "This is the kind of scene that a fucking Worlds champion would have! When PUD announced Savior, that level of popularity wasn't even half of yours!"

PUD had just announced their new mid laner Savior a few days ago. Although the comments under the Weibo post were filled with cheers and praise, the post itself hadn't caused many waves because everyone had been expecting it.

Jian Rong sat cross-legged on the armchair to the side. Ding-*ge* had just finished lecturing him, and Jian Rong guessed that Ding-*ge* was going to continue from where he left off once he finished his phone call.

Jian Rong looked up from his phone and asked, “I’ll give this scene to you, want it?”

“No no no, I couldn’t possibly accept that.” Xiao Bai happily scrolled down the phone screen. When he saw a comment saying “*Road and Pine are both handsome hunks, and now they had Soft too, looking forward to TTC’s future competitions,*” his smile froze, and he patted Pine, who was sitting next to him, and interrogated, “P-baby, am I not handsome?”

Pine shot a very meaningful look at him.

After coordinating with each other for so many years in the bot lane, Xiao Bai instantly knew what kind of crap Pine was going to spout the moment he opened his mouth. Xiao Bai immediately said, “Shut up, I don’t want to know anymore.”

Ding-*ge* finished his call and came back from the balcony. He sat down on the sofa and took a sip of tea to clear his throat, watching Jian Rong with complicated eyes.

“After I finished warning you yesterday night, I told the work chat to get ready to promote, and I said that you couldn’t possibly make a mistake…” Ding-*ge* rubbed his aching face. “Now we don’t need the publicity anymore either. Just then, a friend from Weibo asked if I wanted to spend money to take it off the hot search.”

Jian Rong: “…”

He was silent for a long moment before he said earnestly, “You should take it off. It’s my mess, so I’ll pay for it.”

“No need, it’s not anything serious.” Lu Boyuan said lazily.

He had just been woken up by Ding-*ge*, and his voice was slightly hoarse. Probably because he didn’t get enough sleep, he had only played around on his phone and hadn’t really said anything after coming downstairs.

Originally, Ding-*ge* wanted to lecture Jian Rong a little more, but after Lu Boyuan said that, it wasn’t appropriate for him to keep going.

“…it’s true, we don’t need to take it off. It’s not like any of the topics are slander, and it saved us a lot of money in terms of publicity. I’d rather it hang up on there for an entire day.” Ding-*ge* said, “But you still have to pay the fine.”

Jian Rong nodded.

Yuan Qian said, puzzled, “Xiao Rong insulted someone before the official announcement came out. Even that will be penalized?”

“Of course. You’re a professional player as soon as you’re registered, the official announcement is just a formality.” Ding-*ge*’s phone chimed, and he glanced at it. After a while, he frowned and couldn’t help but let out a, “Fuck…”

Xiao Bai: “What’s wrong?”

“The sponsor daddy is looking for me.” Ding-*ge* said.

Xiao Bai grew terrified at once, and even his speech grew much faster. “What’s the matter? It can’t be that he wants to terminate his contract with

us and look for other teams because he's afraid our popularity will fall after getting a new member right??"

"It's not that." Ding-*ge*'s face was filled with a "*what's wrong with today's society*" confusion. "He said that they're about to release a very coolly designed blue switch mechanical keyboard, and he thinks that Jian Rong suits this product really well. He wants Jian Rong to be a product ambassador for it."

It felt extremely good pressing down on the keys of a blue switch keyboard, and out of all the keyboard types, it was the loudest when typing.

When streaming, Jian Rong had used an old blue switch keyboard. Whenever he was typing and insulting people, the sound of the keyboard was quite stimulating, and the water friends in his stream always called him an expert whenever they heard it.

Everyone: "…"

Even this was okay??

Ding-*ge* lowered his head and replied to the message. "Jian Rong, what do you think? If you're interested, I can discuss it with him."

"I'm not." Jian Rong answered bluntly.

Xiao Bai was startled, and he blurted out, "You better think it over carefully, do you know how many dumbasses you can afford to insult with an endorsement fee?"

Lu Boyuan ducked his head and let out a laugh.

"…" Jian Rong stared at the tangerines on the table, wondering whether or not they were the right size to stuff into Xiao Bai's mouth. "I haven't even played in a single competition yet. With no achievements and nothing to back me up, there's no point in accepting things like this."

Xiao Bai was astonished.

Just like that, Jian Rong's 'money-grubbing' image collapsed in Xiao Bai's mind.

Ding-*ge* was also a bit surprised. He shot a glance at him admiringly. "That's also true. I'll let him know that's the case then. Don't worry, once you show some good results in the future, heaps of endorsements will be waiting for you. It's not urgent right now. Also, don't look at those comments on Weibo, those anti-fans always say the same old stuff to mess with you mentally. I'm afraid you'll be affected if you read too many of them."

"Affected?" Jian Rong furrowed his brows. "Me?"

Ding-*ge* told the truth. "…don't look at them, I'm afraid you won't be able to resist answering if you do."

"Got it."

After the previous incident, Ding-*ge* no longer trusted him in the slightest anymore, and with a flick of his hand he slapped a 'special follow' on Jian Rong.

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of replying to messages.

Ever since he got out of bed, his phone hadn't calmed down once, especially concerning XIU. Lu Boyuan felt like this man's APM wasn't even this fast when he was playing in a competition.

[PUD, XIU: This is the well-behaved kid you were talking about before?]

[PUD, XIU: The well-behaved kid that debuted with a penalty announcement?]

[PUD, XIU: You did this on purpose, didn't you, so I deliberately wouldn't be able to guess it right?]

[R: No]

[PUD, XIU: Did you know that after your team's official announcement, all—and I mean all—the other teams have the same exact meme as their top comment under their latest Weibo posts?]

[R: ?]

[PUD, XIU: [run.jpg][3]]

[R: …]

Lu Boyuan found him too noisy, so he put his phone on mute and got up to get a glass of water.

When he passed by Jian Rong, he saw from the corner of his eyes that Jian Rong was scrolling through the Weibo comment section.

But he wasn't scrolling through his own comments; rather, it was Lu Boyuan's.

Jian Rong was looking through the comments underneath Lu Boyuan's newest Weibo post. Every time he saw one that was badmouthing himself, his eyebrows knit even tighter together.

The word that appeared most frequently in Lu Boyuan's comment section was "liar."

He was in the middle of concentratedly reading through them when someone very lightly patted his head twice.

"Don't cross your legs, it's not good for your back." Lu Boyuan said mildly.

Jian Rong immediately covered his phone screen with his hand and put down his legs, sitting up straight. "...okay."

After Lu Boyuan left, Jian Rong was about to let out a breath of air when his phone suddenly buzzed.

[R is transferring you 10,000 yuan.]

Jian Rong stared blankly and subconsciously asked:

[R-ong: Transferred to the wrong person?]

[R: Penalty money.]

[R-ong: ?]

[R: Since you helped me insult them back, then of course I should pay the penalty fee.]

Jian Rong returned the money.

[R-ong: It's fine, I just felt like insulting them. I flamed them voluntarily, so I'll take the blame.]

[R: Then half-half?]

[R-ong: No.]

[R: The team's signing bonus probably won't hit your account until next week.]

It took half a minute for him to get a response to that.

Lu Boyuan glanced down at it and couldn't help but laugh.

Jian Rong directly sent him a screenshot of a bank account balance. All of his wealth was consolidated into one number, displayed clearly in front of Lu Boyuan's eyes.

[R-ong: I have a lot of money.]

[R: Got it.]

Lu Boyuan didn't say anything else. He opened his contact list and found a friend.

[R: Help me order another custom keyboard.]

The other side replied very quickly: [OK, what type?]

[R: The same style as mine, but change it into blue and white. Make the letter on the keycap ‘S,’ and engrave Soft on the back.]

[Gotcha. If it’s going to be the same kind as yours, then it’ll be the same old price: 6,800[4].]

[R: Make two]

[Both engraved with Soft?]

[R: Yes, the other one will be used on stage.]

After dinner, Ding-*ge* instructed the rest of TTC’s members to repost the official Weibo announcement, saying that it was easier to create goodwill for Jian Rong if the team members personally stepped up.

As a result, that night, the esports fans got another string of Weibo posts—

[TTC · Qian: Welcome new member, let’s work hard together in the future! Our first goal, winning the spring season! //TTC Esports Club: Welcome new member…]

[TTC · Pine: Welcome //TTC Esports Club: Welcome new member…]

[TTC · Bye: Looking forward to the best you^ ^ //League of Legends Esports: [Article: The penalty announcement concerning the inappropriate statements made by TTC’s Jian Rong (ID: TTC · Soft) on Weibo]]

“Zhuang Yibai!!!” Smoke spouted from Ding-*ge*’s ears as he seethed with anger. He roared upstairs, “You reposted the wrong fucking Weibo!!!!!”

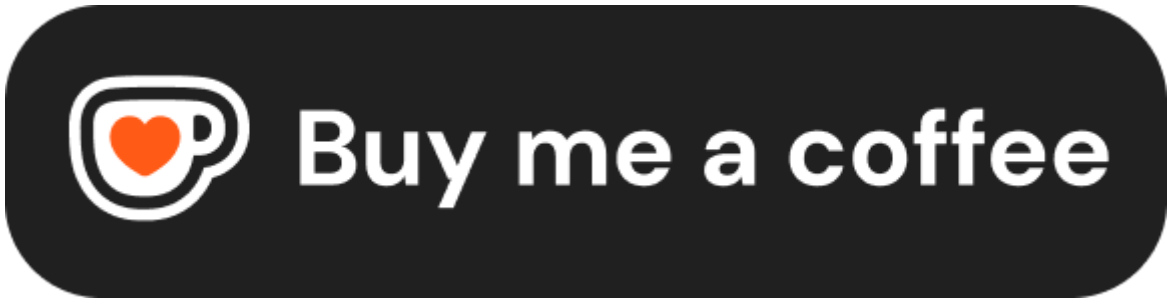
Jian Rong laughed and commented an “OK” underneath that post before continuing to scroll downwards.

[TTC · Road: Wasn’t lying. Welcome @TTC · Soft]

Translation Notes

1. *Ghost accounts that people can buy to post comments and boost popularity* ^
2. *About 1500 USD* ^
3.

the meme ^
4. *About $1000* ^



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ICDI Chapter 28: Stalker.

Bonus Ko-fi chapter! Thanks to Aria and Anonymous~

The next day, Jian Rong woke up late.

By the time he got to the practice room, everyone else was already sitting in front of their computers. The short break was over, and now all the teams had resumed their training.

“Jian Rong, give me an explanation right now!” Xiao Bai was duo queueing with Pine, and when he saw Jian Rong come in, he said without looking back, “How come you only commented on and liked the posts from us three, but you reposted, liked, and commented on my *ge*’s Weibo?!”

Jian Rong was still sleepy. He sat down in his chair and started up his computer before taking a bite out of the bread that was serving as his breakfast. “Forgot.”

Xiao Bai blurted out, “You can even fucking forget that?!”

Jian Rong copied his way of speaking. “Didn’t you also fucking repost the wrong Weibo?”

“…” Xiao Bai knew he was in the wrong, and his voice weakened. “It’s not like I did that on purpose. Because of that, I was scolded by Ding-*ge* the entire night.”

Jian Rong nodded. “Serves you right.”

Even though Jian Rong said that, he still unlocked his phone and reposted the other three members' Weibos as well.

He really wasn't deliberately trying to treat them differently. It was just that when he saw Lu Boyuan @ him, his fingers couldn't help but repost it all on their own.

"Oh shit, Captain," Yuan Qian suddenly called out. "You're playing on the Korean server? And you even matched into a game against M7's jungler?"

Jian Rong subconsciously looked back.

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of a team fight, and when he heard that, he gave an indifferent "mn."

Currently in competitive LoL, there were two junglers who were fairly famous.

One was the LPL's ace, Road.

The other was the veteran jungler Juggler from the LEC, Europe's professional league, belonging to the team M7.

Juggler had started playing in the LEC during its initial phase, and it could be said that the LEC became well-known in its beginning period because of him. Unfortunately, before he could be seated firmly on the throne as the world's best jungler, Road dominatingly entered the scene and forced him back into the position of Europe's best jungler with a single 3:1 competition.

Every time TTC faced off against M7, the fans always called it the “jungler solo.” The win would always go to the jungler who performed better.

During all the previous years, of course it was Lu Boyuan who had relatively more wins. It was a pity that the two teams hadn’t encountered one another during the knockout stage this year, depriving the fans of a jungler king life or death match.

Yuan Qian instantly moved his chair over to watch. Jian Rong took a few bites of his bread before he finally couldn’t resist standing up and walking over to about half a meter behind Lu Boyuan, secretly observing the fight.

It was already forty minutes into the game. Lu Boyuan’s score was 6/2/7, and he had the advantage concerning every aspect of his items.

After ganking the sleepwalking enemy mid laner in the jungle, Lu Boyuan pressed B to recall to base and reached out to pull the empty chair at his side closer to him.

“Can you see from that far away?” He said, “Sit here.”

“…” How did Lu Boyuan know that Jian Rong was secretly watching?

Jian Rong hesitated briefly before he still chose to sit down in the empty chair, holding his bread and milk.

Juggler was playing Lee Sin, and he wasn’t doing that badly either. However, the teammates he had matched with weren’t very impressive, and it was very easy for Lu Boyuan to gank them. It didn’t take long for Lu Boyuan to start controlling the rhythm of the game.

“There are many champions that can be used to fight against Lee Sin.” When the game was nearly over, Lu Boyuan suddenly spoke. “When solo queueing in the lower tiers, you can use Xin Zhao.”

Jian Rong thought that Lu Boyuan was talking to him, and he swallowed his mouthful of bread. “Don’t, I feel annoyed whenever I see a teammate pick Xin Zhao.”

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow in surprise. “Why.”

“70% of the time,” Jian Rong gave a conservative estimate, “the people who choose this champion aren’t very good players.”

Lu Boyuan restrained his laughter. “…I see.”

The game ended after forty-five minutes, and Lu Boyuan successfully took down 18 of Juggler’s points.

Perhaps because he lost this game too oppressively, Juggler didn’t say anything before leaving the post-game lobby.

Lu Boyuan turned and glanced at Jian Rong. “That’s all you’re eating for breakfast?”

Jian Rong said honestly, “I got up too late, so Auntie already went to take a walk at the park. It’s fine, I’m just padding my stomach a bit.”

Jian Rong took a large bite of the bread. He was about to return to his seat and practice on his own when he lifted his head and saw that the webcam above the computer was lit up.

He froze mid-chew and lifted a hand to point at the webcam. He asked indistinctly, “Why is the light on?”

Lu Boyuan said, “I’m streaming.”

Jian Rong: “?”

Lu Boyuan minimized the game, revealing the livestream interface that Jian Rong was familiar with.

Not only was he streaming, his camera was also on.

Since Jian Rong woke up late, he hadn’t really messed with his hair, and he had only raked a hand through it a few times before coming downstairs.

In the video, he saw that he had a tired appearance and chaotic hair, and only one of his shirt sleeves was rolled up. There was a large chunk of bread stuffed in his mouth, and there were some crumbs stuck to the corner of his lips.

[…how did the little dumbass become this ugly, is TTC mistreating you?]

[How is he ugly, he’s clearly stupid cute.]

[Who did you say wasn’t a good player??]

[The Xin Zhao players have been offended and have decided to record that clip of you and Bye saying “fuck” just then to turn over to the LPL Discipline Committee]

[Jian Rong, who were you just pointing at? Didn't Dad teach you to behave politely before?]

[Oh shit, I've solved it. The person carrying the little dumbass that night was Road, right?]

[Absolutely, the figure matches up.]

[That night? Carrying? What are you Soft fans talking about clue me in]

[Son, in the future when you go onstage, you must never stand next to God Lu. When you stand by him, you look like the prince of a dwarf kingdom.]

Jian Rong blurted out, "I'm like your…"

"He wasn't the one in that picture," Lu Boyuan cut him off, his tone natural. "He's still underage, why would he be drinking alcohol."

After that, he shifted his finger and banned the person who said 'prince of a dwarf kingdom' from commenting.

The water friends: "?"

Jian Rong too, guiltily: "?"

[It'd be weirder if it wasn't him. I've been fucking watching him stream for two years now, I know what he looks like even better than his girlfriend does.]

Lu Boyuan raised his eyebrow very slightly and turned his head to ask, "You have a girlfriend?"

“No.” Jian Rong said.

[BS, that woman even sent you a voice message calling you husband, I heard it with my own ears.]

This time, before Lu Boyuan could ask, Jian Rong explained first. “That was a streamer friend who sent a message to the wrong person.”

To the wrong person?

Lu Boyuan nodded and didn’t say anything else.

At four, Lu Boyuan punctually stopped streaming.

Right after he turned off the stream, Ding-*ge* pushed open the practice room door.

“The interview team has already arrived, you guys go change into your uniforms.” Ding-*ge* frowned when he saw Jian Rong’s appearance and condition. “…are you awake or are you sleepwalking?”

“Didn’t sleep well last night.” Jian Rong asked, “What interview team?”

“They’re conducting the regular pre-spring season interviews today that they use for publicity. Everybody has to record one. Didn’t I send you a WeChat?”

Jian Rong rubbed his eyes. “I didn’t have time to check.”

Jian Rong changed clothes quickly and went downstairs.

This was actually his first time officially wearing the team uniform, and his blue hair didn't clash at all with the black and white color scheme.

"Pretty handsome." Ding-*ge* smiled. "How about I take a picture of you and you can send it to your family so they can see?"

Jian Rong wanted to say it wasn't necessary, but when the words reached his mouth, it became, "…okay, thank you."

Ding-*ge* held the phone and couldn't help directing, "Lift your chin up a little more, stand up straight."

Jian Rong had just straightened his back when someone hooked an arm over his shoulders.

"Taking a photo?" Xiao Bai said, "Let's take one together! P-baby come here, stand next to me."

Pine glanced at Jian Rong, who didn't refuse even though his lips were tightened and he looked somewhat uncomfortable, and Pine silently stepped forward next to Xiao Bai.

As Yuan Qian was passing by, he couldn't resist joining in too. "Let me know when you're taking the picture, I'll suck my stomach in… Captain!"

Lu Boyuan looked up from his phone.

"*Ge*, come over for the photo! It's gonna be sent to Jian Rong's family!" Xiao Bai beckoned towards him.

The space next to Jian Rong was already filled with people.

Lu Boyuan shot a look at the chaotic formation before he finally stood behind Jian Rong, with no more than a fist's width between them.

Ding-*ge*: "Three, two, one… done!"

The photo was really ugly.

So ugly that even Pine frowned and walked away.

"Damn, only my *ge* is handsome! How come my *ge* isn't ugly even when the picture is taken like this??" Xiao Bai was infuriated.

Yuan Qian nodded. "Xiao Rong looks pretty good too. Sure enough, there are many benefits to being pale[1]. Send the picture in the group chat; even though it's a bit ugly, we can also just consider it as commemoration."

Jian Rong only got his phone back after Xiao Bai sent the photo to the group chat.

He stared at the picture for ten or so seconds and didn't send it to anyone. Instead, he silently pressed 'save' before slipping his phone back into his pocket.

The interview team spent some time taking shots outside the base before they finally came inside.

This time, the one in charge of interviewing them was one of the LPL's famous female hosts. The woman's hair was curled in large, mature waves, and her makeup was delicate. She wore a pair of sky-high heels and walked inside while chatting and laughing with Ding-*ge*.

It was evident that she was also acquainted with the other TTC members. She curved her eyes in a smile and said, “Long time no see.”

“It hasn’t really been that long. Didn’t you just interview me during the quarterfinals?” Yuan Qian also grinned. “Xiao Rong, let me introduce you. This is LPL host Tang Qin, you’ll cross paths with each other frequently in the future.”

Jian Rong said, “Hello.”

“Hello.” Tang Qin’s voice was as gentle as she was. “Actually, I’ve watched you stream since a long time ago. You’re really awesome.”

Jian Rong uneasily pursed his lips. “Thank you.”

Only after greeting the others did Tang Qin look at the person sitting next to her. “God Lu, could you move to the side a bit and make some space for me?”

Her voice was completely different from the way it sounded when she was talking to other people.

It was a little lower, as well as a little softer.

Jian Rong was sitting on the sofa across from them and subconsciously glanced over when he heard her speak.

Lu Boyuan gave an “en” and directly stood up from the couch. “You can sit.”

Tang Qin’s smile froze briefly. “…okay.”

A few minutes later, Ding-*ge* and the person in charge of the interviews returned from their conversation together, and the interviews began soon after.

Naturally, the first person to be interviewed was Lu Boyuan, and the interview would be taking place in one of the clean practice rooms on the second floor.

Jian Rong waited outside the room with the others. He absent-mindedly played on his phone, and he would lift his head every so often to shoot a look at the tightly closed door.

After that happened a few times, Xiao Bai couldn't help but ask from next to him, "What are you looking at?"

"Nothing." Jian Rong lowered his head and fiddled with his phone. Not long after, he asked, pretending to be nonchalant, "That female host… is she very close with Road?"

"Of course." Xiao Bai said, "She's pretty close with all the pro players."

Jian Rong, "Oh."

Xiao Bai leaned against the railing and gossiped, "Isn't she quite beautiful? A lot of pro players have pursued her before, I know about them all."

Jian Rong hummed and asked after a long pause, "Road's pursued her before too?"

Xiao Bai whipped his head around, staring at him with a face full of shock. “What kind of nonsense are you saying? As if my *ge* needs to pursue someone? My *ge* is definitely the one being pursued! Wait a minute… you don’t know?”

Jian Rong was lost. “Know what?”

“Isn’t it super obvious? Tang Qin-*jie* likes my *ge*. That’s old gossip that’s been around forever in the circle.” Xiao Bai said, “Someone also specifically compiled a video of the way she looks at my *ge* during her interviews with him. What love and adoration.”

Jian Rong had never paid attention to gossip like this before. “…then, did he accept?”

“Nope. I’ve even asked my *ge* about it before. He said that he was young, didn’t want to date, and preferred focusing on playing competitively instead.” Xiao Bai thought it over. “But that was a couple years ago, my *ge*’s getting to that age now too. Maybe he’ll start dating someday… but I can’t say for sure who his partner would be. There are too many people chasing after my *ge*.”

Jian Rong propped a hand up under his chin and nodded without saying anything.

But Xiao Bai was getting into the swing of things. “Female streamers, female hosts, female fans, oh also male fans…”

“Male fans?” Jian Rong was startled.

“Yup.” Xiao Bai recalled something and scrunched up his face. “But that male fan was just a pervert. In the end, the incident from that mess ended up being reported to the police. Wanna hear about it?”

Jian Rong nodded. “Yeah.”

Xiao Bai lowered his voice. “It’s just… a few years ago, my *ge* streamed this one time. Back then, we had just started streaming and weren’t familiar with the way things worked, so my *ge* logged into QQ. During that stream, he accidentally exposed his QQ number.”

When Jian Rong heard the word “QQ,” he was momentarily stunned, and he stared blankly at Xiao Bai.

Xiao Bai didn’t notice his expression and continued, “After that, his QQ was bombarded by friend requests, and even up to today my *ge* still hasn’t allowed people to friend request him. Later, my *ge* posted a Weibo about this, and the fans calmed down, so we all thought the matter was finished…

“Except, after about one year had passed, that male fan exploded my *ge*’s inbox with emails.” Xiao Bai spoke exaggeratedly. “QQ’s email inbox ah—besides those huge perverts that are really into harassing people, who else would use such a crappy method?”

Jian Rong: “.”

“That pervert sent my *ge* over 500 emails. It would be whatever if they were just normal emails, but they were all super disgusting confessions, photos, videos, oh—there were even job apps.”

This was Jian Rong's first time hearing about something like this. When he heard that last part, he repeated with difficulty, "…job apps?"

"Mn, he said he wanted to come work part-time at our base, and he actually did end up sending over his resume and photo." Xiao Bai sneered coldly. "What a joke, who the hell would hire a pervert and let them into the base!"

Jian Rong: "…"

"Afterwards, Ding-*ge* reported it to the police, and that person finally stopped only once the police made a visit. Ding-*ge* went over with the police too. He said that the guy looked pretty normal, but who would've thought…" Xiao Bai said, "My *ge* is really unlucky to be liked by that kind of person."

Jian Rong's brain went numb. He contemplated expressionlessly for a while. "Then how come Road still checks his email inbox nowadays? Is he not worried he'll find another perverted email?"

"How could there be that many perverts in this world? After the police got involved, that person vanished." Xiao Bai stretched on the spot. "Also, this was something that happened two or three years ago. If he freaking comes looking again… then he isn't a pervert, he's a stalker."

About a few minutes later, Xiao Bai suddenly realized something, and he turned his head in confusion. "Hold on. How do you know that my *ge* checks his email inbox?"

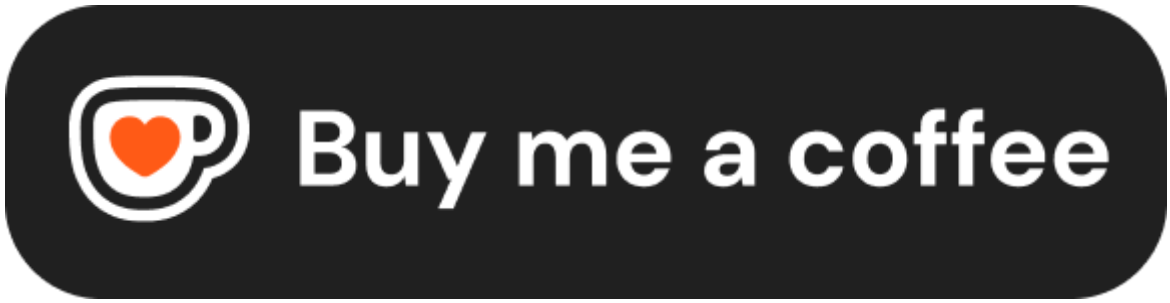
Jian Rong rubbed his ear and avoided Xiao Bai's gaze. He copied the way Lu Boyuan had acted when he had lied earlier that day during his stream, and

he said, "...I dunno, just randomly mentioned it."

Translation Notes

1. *Colorism is bad! Being pale does not make you more attractive >< I'm sure Jian Rong looks good just cuz he's a cutie, not because he's pale* ^

Yan: In case it isn't clear, Rongrong is not the pervert that was stalking LBY a few years ago, but he did copy down the QQ ID during that same stream lol



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ICDI Chapter 29: Even with ten more matches you'd still lose.

Bonus Ko-fi chapter thanks to Kitty, jayde, and Chel!

Ding-*ge* brought some fruit and crackers over for the film crew. When he went upstairs, he saw that the other three people were standing together chatting, but Jian Rong was leaning against the railing and zoning out by himself.

"You didn't eat a lot for breakfast, right?" Ding-*ge* handed the plate to him. "Take some of the crackers to fill your stomach."

"It's fine, I'm not hungry," Jian Rong said.

"Alright." Seeing his tightened lips, Ding-*ge* said, "Don't be too nervous, the interview content and video will go through me first before being posted."

Right after he said that, the door to the practice room opened. It looked like Lu Boyuan's interview was already finished.

"You're next, go ahead." Ding-*ge* patted his shoulder.

Even though the interview was over, Lu Boyuan was still talking to Tang Qin and the interview supervisor. Lighting and sound equipment were set up in the practice room, and several staff members were also standing around, making it seem somewhat crowded.

Jian Rong stood to the right of the doorway, his back pressed against the wall, his head lowered as he waited.

He recalled what Xiao Bai had said just then again, and he clicked his tongue in annoyance.

If he'd known about that earlier, then he wouldn't have sent in some job app.

When Lu Boyuan saw that email, did he also think that Jian Rong was a pervert?

What's more, Jian Rong really had saved Lu Boyuan's QQ number for a very long time. Sometime in the middle, when he had switched phones, he hadn't backed up his pictures or contacts; the only thing he transferred over to his new phone was that QQ number…

"How come you didn't answer the text I sent you yesterday?" Tang Qin's voice was sweet and delicate, traveling over from afar and interrupting Jian Rong's train of thought.

"There were too many messages, so I didn't see it."

Upon hearing that familiar voice, Jian Rong subconsciously turned his head and met Lu Boyuan's eyes right as he walked out of the practice room.

Lu Boyuan stopped. "Why are you standing here?"

Jian Rong shot a glance at Tang Qin, who was behind him. She smiled at him, clearly not minding that he had overheard their conversation just now.

Jian Rong said, “Ding-*ge* said that I’m next for the interview.”

Lu Boyuan nodded. “Go.”

Jian Rong gloomily turned around and was about to enter the practice room when someone suddenly tugged very lightly on his clothing.

Lu Boyuan cast his gaze downwards and helped Jian Rong tug out a small portion of his shirt hem that was stuck in his waistband.

After returning to the practice room, Tang Qin confirmed the interview questions with the supervisor one last time before officially starting the interview.

“This is your first time being interviewed, right? You can just answer as you wish.” Tang Qin slightly raised one long, well-shaped eyebrow. “Your ears are quite red. Is it because you’re too nervous? Or is the heating on too high?”

“Body constitution issue.” Jian Rong sounded calm and didn’t seem nervous at all. “Ask away.”

Tang Qin suddenly remembered the brief interlude that had occurred just now at the entryway.

She smiled without batting an eye. “Okay. First off, a question that everyone is very curious about—why did you want to play competitively?”

…

The interview went on for twenty-five minutes.

At first, Tang Qin thought that Jian Rong would cause some trouble, like with what had happened with the official announcement, but he didn't. From start to finish, he answered every question casually and simply; they weren't standard answers, but there was also nothing wrong with them. In just a few words, his personal style was thoroughly and vividly reflected.

No wonder his streams were so popular despite his young age.

Only the last few questions were left. Tang Qin smiled and asked, "So far, there's still a lot of controversy surrounding you becoming a professional player. What are your views on this?"

Jian Rong said, "I don't view it. The coach is worried that I'll interact with them, so he doesn't allow me to look."

"…I see." Tang Qin held back a laugh. "With your shift from streamer to professional player, the ones who received the biggest shock must have been your livestream fans, right? Do you have anything you want to say to them here? You can face the camera and tell them~"

Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow and put on an "*as if I have anything to say to them*" expression.

After a long pause, he looked into the camera and said, extremely half-heartedly, "I have enough money to pay the penalties, stop worrying so much about me."

—

On Sunday, Ding-*ge* held a small meeting in the practice room.

Sunday was a day of rest, but for professional players, that merely meant that they could get up a little later, play some other games, and watch a few television shows.

"The spring season is in half a month. Starting from tomorrow, we'll be increasing the training time, and I'll be setting up more practice matches." Ding-*ge* said, "The most important thing is strengthening the team's coordination. It'll be up to you all to practice your individual skills, I won't be supervising you guys over that. You should all be aware of what you should be doing."

Xiao Bai sprawled back in his gaming chair. "What teams are scheduled?"

"Currently only two teams are decided. One is Fighting Tiger, the other one is MFG."

There was also etiquette to follow when it came to scheduling practice matches.

First of all, strong teams would almost never play against weak teams. It wasn't really useful for the strong teams, and it was equivalent to helping weak teams train for free.

Secondly, because they were afraid of exposing strategies, strong teams wouldn't go all out in practice matches against each other. For the most part, the purpose of a practice match was to test out a certain champion's strength in the current meta[1] and the adaptability of a team composition during a competition.

Every practice match was a custom game, and when the round was almost finished, the members of both teams would simultaneously withdraw from the game. Without a completed match, the scores wouldn't show up on their profiles, so it wasn't actually important whether a team won or lost a practice match.

It was precisely because of this that some teams were indomitable during practice matches but ended up with a string of defeats during competitions.

"Don't schedule with MFG." Lu Boyuan said without looking back.

It was acceptable to hide strategies during a practice match, but it was a little excessive for MFG to let a half-retired substitute play when they clearly knew that TTC was practicing with their newcomer.

"They've apologized to me for that already. They said that their starting jungler was back at his hometown during that period." Ding-*ge* said, "Try one more time. If something happens this time too, I won't schedule any more matches with them in the future."

Lu Boyuan didn't reply and remained silent.

Ding-*ge* was going to continue talking, but his phone suddenly rang. He glanced at the caller ID before he lifted an eyebrow in surprise and walked out of the room, saying that he had something to attend to.

"Then should we eat something good tonight?" Xiao Bai straightened up and looked at Lu Boyuan. "*Ge*, how about we order from that private home kitchen we got food from before?"

“You guys can eat it, my treat.” Lu Boyuan turned off his computer.

Xiao Bai was startled. “You’re going out?”

Lu Boyuan casually threw on his jacket. “Mn.”

As Lu Boyuan passed by Jian Rong, he shot a glance at Jian Rong’s computer screen.

The screen was stuck on the LoL client’s homepage. Nothing was playing, and the owner seemed like he was just sitting in front of the computer spacing out.

“I’ll forward the WeChat in the group.” Lu Boyuan paused. “Order whatever you all want.”

Everyone else answered with an “okay,” but only Jian Rong didn’t look up. His cursor swayed back and forth on the screen.

Lu Boyuan stared at the back of his head for a few seconds before he turned around and left the practice room.

“Jian Rong, take a look at what you want to eat.” Xiao Bai pushed his phone over in front of Jian Rong, and there was a menu pulled up on it.

Jian Rong swept a cursory glance over it.

“Whatever… one bowl of rice is 22 yuan[2]?” Jian Rong was filled with doubt. “Are they cooking with gold??”

Xiao Bai misheard him, and he was dumbfounded for a few seconds before he said, “This private home kitchen is just really expensive, apparently it’s some special kind of rice… don’t worry about the price, in any case my *ge* is the one paying.”

Jian Rong scanned the rest of the dishes, and the prices were even more extravagant. He averted his gaze. “Don’t like eating these things, you guys can order.”

Jian Rong wasn’t actually that hungry, since he had just eaten a bowl of noodles at three in the afternoon. After he finished a ranked game, he stretched and got up to discuss with Ding-*ge* the matter of staying at the base during Lunar New Year.

The light in the meeting room was on, but the door wasn’t shut completely, with a tiny crack still open.

Jian Rong had just put his hand on the doorknob—

“Is it just because he was recommended by Captain?” An unfamiliar, somewhat youthful voice spoke. “So he could become a starter the moment he entered the team?”

Jian Rong paused in his movements. He peeked inside and saw the substitute mid laner from TTC’s summer season standing there; he seemed to be called Hezi[3].

“A member can’t have the final say regarding the starting roster.” Ding-*ge*’s tone of voice was severe. “Don’t say something like that again next time.”

Hezi was silent for a while before he said, “My apologies.

“But I still can’t understand. Coach, I could accept it if you found any other experienced, independent player to be a starter. But he’s just a streamer…” Hezi’s voice was gloomy. “He hasn’t undergone any training before, nor does he have experience competing. How can you be certain that he can play better than me on stage?

“If… if the one that Captain recommended back then was me, then would I also have been able to become a starter?”

Each and every word was permeated with the two words “*still unconvinced*.”

Hearing that, Jian Rong withdrew his hand, expressionlessly turned around, and left.

Ding-*ge* didn’t really scold Hezi. After all, it was the child that he had single-handedly brought out of the trainee team. Ding-*ge* knew that Hezi felt wronged inside, so he only said a little bit before he told him to go back and focus on training.

Hezi returned to the villa in the back that belonged to the second team and rejected the other members’ invitation to eat midnight snacks with them. He went back to the practice room by himself and started streaming as he played in ranked to practice.

Before he even matched into his first game, his phone suddenly vibrated—

[R-ong has requested to add you as a friend. Attached message: Soft]

Hezi was startled.

Ding-*ge* told Soft about it this fast??

Hezi knew what Soft's personality and temper were like, so he subconsciously thought that Soft was coming to insult him. He hesitated on the friend request interface for quite a while before he hardened his heart and pressed accept.

There was nothing wrong with what he said to Ding-*ge* just then. He definitely wasn't afraid.

Hezi stared fixedly at their chat, already preparing himself mentally to be flamed. He had even thought of how he should curse him back when—

[R-ong: Come solo]

Hezi was stupefied for a bit before he carefully replied with a "?".

[R-ong: Yes or no?]

[Hezi: ……]

[Hezi: Yes!]

—

A barbeque stand at night.

Two men sat across from each other, chatting casually. The person on the right was basically the only one eating the meat skewers. The man on the

left was wearing a baseball cap, one hand stuck in his pocket while he listened quietly to the other man talk.

“Korean people really love playing late game way too much. In eight out of ten games they’ll choose a late game champion, my butt is almost flat from sitting so much…” Right after XIU said that, a notification sound abruptly came from his phone.

He clicked on the notification and glanced at it before clicking easily on the link to the stream that his coach sent over.

When Lu Boyuan heard the sound that floated over from the phone, he tugged down his mask and asked indifferently, “You made me come here to listen to you watch a livestream?”

“No, the coach told me to watch this streamer’s 1v1. He said that the person soloing against him is pretty good.” XIU was about to close the webpage when he suddenly realized that the streamer’s ID was somewhat familiar. He narrowed his eyes and asked, “Hezi… isn’t he your team’s substitute mid laner? Who is he soloing with ah… ‘What Can You Do Besides Being Carried,’ do you recognize this ID?”

Lu Boyuan looked up when he heard that and pondered over it for two seconds.

That’s right, it was his mid laner’s side account.

Lu Boyuan, “Which livestream room?”

Tonight, Hezi’s stream popularity reached new heights.

He was tethered by the enemy LeBlanc's chain, and after he lost the last of his health, he left the game with a dejected expression.

The barrage was an unceasing flood.

[6:1!!! Being Carried is so badass!]

[Who is Hezi soloing with ah?? Does anyone recognize this ID?]

[Hezi only narrowly won a round when he soloed using Lissandra, the champion he's the best at… he lost with all the other champions.]

[Hezi was originally a team fight-type player anyway. But the other side's gameplay really is super amazing…]

[Just saying, I think this LeBlanc is a little like a certain dumbass.]

[To tell the truth, me too. I even went to check the match history. This account duo Q'd with TTC's Xiao Bai last week.]

[But I haven't seen the little dumbass use this side account before?]

[Are you all calling LeBlanc a dumbass? Why? Have they provoked or angered you somehow? How come I can't understand the barrage…]

Hezi switched away from the streaming interface. The two of them had returned to the game lobby.

[What Can You Do Besides Being Carried: The next match, which champion?]

[Hehe[4]: Do you know how to play Cassiopeia?]

Everyone in the barrage was advising Hehe to try and accept reality, and to stop soloing with this person.

But he had long stopped doing this because he wanted to regain his honor.

He just purely wanted to play a few more rounds against Soft and watch how he played the game.

[What Can You Do Besides Being Carried: Yes. How many more games will you lose before you're convinced?]

[Hehe: ?]

[What Can You Do Besides Being Carried: I'm hungry.]

[Hehe: I am convinced ah. This round Cassiopeia, the next round Qiyana?]

[What Can You Do Besides Being Carried: Then I'm done, getting off now.]

[Hehe: Nooo, play a few more games.]

[What Can You Do Besides Being Carried: Even with ten more matches you'd still lose. Don't waste time.]

Right after that was sent, the other person left the custom game lobby and went offline at the speed of light.

Hezi: "???"

[Damn, the more I look at it the more similar it feels...]

[It's definitely that brat who's looking for a beating.]

[This dumbass son won't be seeking out pro players to solo every day from now on right??]

[Why are you all acting like you've guessed who it was?? Is it that easy to guess???]

[Mn, just wait, wait for him later on… you'll also be able to recognize him in a heartbeat.]

Today was a day off, so the other three team members were all watching variety shows or playing different games.

Jian Rong's stomach was so empty that it hurt. He rubbed his belly and went to look for something to eat in the kitchen. As he crouched down and fished out an unopened package of bread from the very bottom cabinet, the phone in his pocket suddenly vibrated.

He stuck the bread in the crook of his elbow and pulled out his phone.

[R: [Sharing location]]

[R-ong: What's the matter?]

[R: Come here.]

Jian Rong didn't even have time to eat a single chunk of bread before he randomly threw on a jacket and left.

The destination was on a side street. Worried that Lu Boyuan wanted him to come out at night because of something urgent, Jian Rong speed-walked

the entire way after getting out of the taxi. Finally, he made it to the barbeque stand after following the navigation.

Jian Rong stopped walking and stared blankly at the two people sitting at a dining table in front of the stand.

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of a conversation with the man sitting across from him.

The brim of his hat completely concealed his eyes, and his right hand was propped up lazily on the chair next to him. He was biting an unlit cigarette, his mask pulled under his chin. Because of something he heard, the corners of his mouth were also tilted up as he smiled very slightly.

Jian Rong departed in too much of a rush, so he hadn't brought his hat or mask.

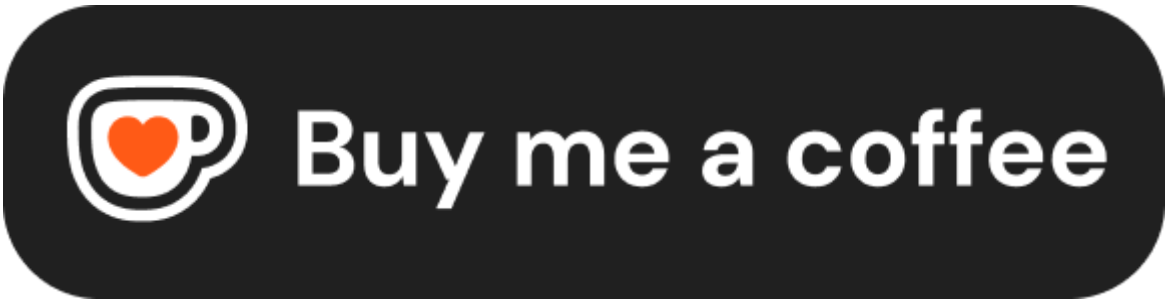
His hair color was way too conspicuous, and XIU spotted him with one look.

"Oh hey." XIU was surprised, and he blurted out, "That well-behaved kid of yours is here."

Translation Notes

1. *In gaming, meta refers to what's currently the most accepted/optimal way to play the game (i.e. preferred champions). What's meta can change frequently with patches/updates, which is also why what is 'meta' in ICDI may not necessarily reflect what's actually meta in LoL right now* ^

2. *A little more than $3. This might not seem that bad but considering you can easily get a great meal in China for like ... 15 yuan, it's really expensive especially because rice is usually like part of the meal lol* ^
3. *Hezi literally means box, so... again, like Shiliu (Pomegranate) I'll just be leaving his name as Hezi* ^
4. *This is Hezi's He repeated twice, not 'hehe' like laughter* ^



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ICDI Chapter 30: How come you haven’t been asking to duo queue with me lately?

Jian Rong knew that Lu Boyuan smoked. Before, when he was ‘eavesdropping’ on the balcony, Lu Boyuan had come back inside carrying an ashtray.

With a cigarette in his mouth, Lu Boyuan lost the gentle aura that he usually gave off, and it felt like he merged entirely into Shanghai’s wintry night.

When Jian Rong walked over, he heard XIU ask, “You called him here?”

Lu Boyuan gave a mild “en” and deposited the cigarette onto a napkin on the table. He pulled out the chair next to him and gestured for Jian Rong to sit down.

Jian Rong didn’t ask any questions. He tugged once at his jacket and sat.

“Tch, isn’t that just a waste?” XIU looked regretfully at that unlit cigarette.

Lu Boyuan said, “I said I wasn’t going to smoke, but you insisted on giving it to me.”

“What’s the fun in smoking by myself.” XIU glanced at Jian Rong and tossed his cigarette pack over to him. “Soft, you…”

Jian Rong tossed the cigarette pack back. “I don’t smoke.”

XIU: “…”

XIU had never watched Jian Rong's streams, but he had heard of this person before.

Only those same old phrases: arrogant, egotistical, foul-mouthed, condescending. Rumor had it that there weren't many professional players who could escape being ridiculed by him.

But XIU had never paid much attention to the antis' opinions. He believed that everyone who entered the world of the internet had to lower their own bottom line, including himself. When he was young and played different games, he had also insulted people behind their back, so he didn't really have any conflicts or disgust towards Soft.

However, with an outsider present, it naturally wasn't as easy to chat casually anymore. XIU chuckled. "Why did you call him out here? You should explain yourself quickly."

Before Lu Boyuan could say anything, a girl suddenly walked over to their table. She was carrying a bag and, after spotting the number printed on the table, she hesitantly asked, "Hello, may I ask if you were the ones who called the delivery service?"

Lu Boyuan said, "Yes, thank you."

After the girl left, Lu Boyuan placed the bag in front of Jian Rong.

Jian Rong asked, stunned, "What is it?"

"Dinner." Lu Boyuan said, "Aren't you hungry?"

…how did he know?

Jian Rong opened the bag. Inside was a steaming bowl of crab roe noodles, and it looked like there was more crab roe than there were noodles.

Jian Rong was starving the entire night, and his stomach couldn't help but rumble the moment he saw food.

XIU's face was filled with question marks. "Hey, no way, aren't we at a barbeque restaurant? You won't eat the skewers, but you'll call for delivery and make them buy crab roe noodles for you??"

Lu Boyuan didn't say anything. He only shot a look at the barbeque stand owner standing not too far away. The man had just picked up a handful of sesame seeds and sprinkled it over the food without even wearing gloves.

Damn. No wonder you haven't touched any of the food up until now.

XIU said, "Then couldn't you have delivered it straight to the base? You had to order it and eat it right in front of me??"

Jian Rong, having had the same misgivings, pricked up his ears.

Lu Boyuan actually had considered that.

Except he was worried that this person would go try to solo Hezi again after eating his fill, so he decided that he might as well just call Jian Rong out.

The sound of the phone ringing interrupted their dialogue; the caller ID showed Ding-*ge*. Lu Boyuan listened for a few seconds after answering the phone before he got up and walked over to the entrance.

XIU's tobacco addiction emerged again, and he took out a cigarette. "You can handle the smell of smoke, right?"

Jian Rong pulled apart the chopsticks. "Yes."

Just like that, XIU smoked while he watched that blue-colored head in front of him duck lower and eat noodles.

How come he got the impression that… Soft really did seem to be quite well-behaved? He came over when he was told to come over, he ate noodles when he was told to eat noodles, and he also spoke politely and normally.

Maybe Lu Boyuan hadn't lied to him, and Soft only acted that way in his streams in order to sell a persona?

XIU was a bit of a chatterbox, and he couldn't quiet down. With that train of thought, he started to speak like an elder. "How did you get over here?"

Jian Rong was focused on eating noodles, and he didn't lift his head. "Took a taxi."

"Not training during this hour?"

"No."

"I heard that back when you used to stream, you were pretty accomplished. How come you suddenly wanted to play competitively?"

Jian Rong picked up a napkin and wiped his mouth without answering him.

XIU thought that the other person hadn't heard him. He blew out a cloud of smoke. "You…"

Jian Rong: "*Champion Times*, issue 46."

XIU was startled. "What?"

"My interview. If you're curious, you can go take a look." Jian Rong said coolly.

"…"

Sure enough, Road was lying to him.

Right after Lu Boyuan finished his call and came back, XIU got a call from his coach telling him to get back to the base.

Before leaving, XIU got up and patted Lu Boyuan's shoulder. "I'm going now. You and your team's well—behaved—mid—laner, enjoy your meal."

Jian Rong choked and swiftly swallowed the noodles in his mouth.

It was just the two of them left at the table.

Lu Boyuan calmly watched him eat. Jian Rong didn't say anything either, and it was silent between them for a while.

All the way up until LoL's sound effects came from Lu Boyuan's phone.

Lu Boyuan seemed to be watching a stream. Jian Rong concentratedly listened for a while, and when he heard, "*I know I can't beat him in solo…*

he's just a friend, don't go and friend request him, you'll trouble him," he abruptly raised his head.

If he hadn't misheard it… that sounded like Hezi's voice.

"What's wrong." Lu Boyuan's gaze remained on his phone.

Jian Rong knew that he couldn't hide it anymore. He swallowed the noodles and said after a long pause, "…I didn't know that he was streaming."

Lu Boyuan gave an "en" and finally looked up to ask, "Why solo with him?"

The color of Lu Boyuan's eyes was very dark. Jian Rong met his gaze for a few seconds before he averted his eyes and said, extremely quickly, "He wasn't willing to acknowledge me."

If Hezi wasn't convinced, then Jian Rong would beat him up until he was. It was just that simple in esports.

Lu Boyuan already knew the whole story. The reason why Ding-*ge* called him earlier was to tell him about that incident.

He asked, "Hezi sought you out?"

Jian Rong shook his head. "I looked for him. He was having a talk with Ding-*ge* in the meeting room, and I overheard a bit of it."

"Just because of that?" Lu Boyuan paused. "Hezi played as a substitute for the team for an entire year. If a new starter suddenly appears, it's very normal for him to be unable to accept it for a while."

Jian Rong spoke naturally. “I’m very petty.”

Lu Boyuan laughed. He closed the stream replay and placed his phone down to the side. “Are you angry because he wasn’t convinced, or are you angry because he thought that I let you in through the back door?”

“…”

Jian Rong put down his chopsticks and slowly wiped his mouth clean before saying, “Both.”

Lu Boyuan nodded and suddenly asked, “Then what do you think, did I open the back door for you.”

Jian Rong pressed his lips together and stayed silent.

If it weren’t for Lu Boyuan’s recommendation, he didn’t think that TTC would’ve discovered him. In addition, that email… it was true that Jian Rong hadn’t gone through the official channel and had sent it directly to Lu Boyuan instead.

Lu Boyuan hadn’t expected Jian Rong to hesitate for so long over it. He couldn’t help but laugh and say, his voice dropping, “Don’t think about it anymore, I didn’t.”

Jian Rong watched him quietly, and when he heard that, he blinked.

“If I had to put it in words, then it should be… I discovered you.” Lu Boyuan said mildly. “I felt like your skill and familiarity with the champions were

professional-level, so I recommended you to the team. This was to give you an opportunity, and also to give the team an opportunity.

“But after that, you fought through the tryouts on your own. The team was the one who nodded and let you become a starter, not me. If you played well, then you would get the position; if you couldn’t, then you would have to leave. From beginning to end, there wasn’t really a back door to open.” After saying that, Lu Boyuan paused. “But… if this kind of thing happens again in the future, don’t go trying to solo them again. Right now, you’re a professional player, so you have an even better way to respond.”

Jian Rong blurted out, “What is it?”

“Winning competitions.” Lu Boyuan spoke concisely. “If someone isn’t convinced by you, then you just have to beat them before walking over and shaking their hand.”

This was one of LoL’s competition rules. The winning team had to get up and shake hands with the losing team, reflecting the importance of camaraderie in esports’ team spirit.

Jian Rong was silent for a few seconds before he nodded, expressing that he understood.

After paying for the barbeque, they called a car and went back to the base.

Once they arrived at the base’s front door, Jian Rong was in the middle of entering the password when Lu Boyuan suddenly remembered something.

He lowered his eyes and asked, “How come you haven’t been asking to duo queue with me lately?”

It couldn’t be any more normal for a team’s mid laner and jungler to duo queue together. In fact, it was even customary in some teams; after all, those two positions had to practice coordination.

The door lock beeped twice as Jian Rong pressed the wrong number.

Why else.

Ever since Xiao Bai brought up that incident, Jian Rong had continued to frantically flip-flop between two thoughts: “*I’m a pervert*” and “*how the fuck could I possibly be a pervert*.”

Jian Rong didn’t look up. “…I saw that you were playing on the Korean server, so I didn’t ask.”

“It’s because you didn’t ask that I went to play on the Korean server.” Lu Boyuan saw that Jian Rong was about to hit the wrong number again and he grabbed his hand, moving it aside. He input the last number in the password, and the door opened. “In the future, call for me at any time.”

After that, Lu Boyuan entered first.

Jian Rong loitered around at the entrance for a few minutes. He only put on his slippers and walked inside once the wrist that Lu Boyuan had grasped stopped burning.

—

During the next few days, TTC's members spent their time playing practice match after practice match.

When the practice matches were finished, then it was playing ranked. In that week, nobody left the base. Jian Rong realized that it was about time for him to cut his hair only after it started to prick his eyelids.

After another practice match with MFG, Kongkong asked for his WeChat in the chat. Jian Rong sent it over before he left the lobby.

"You guys played pretty well tonight." Ding-*ge* paused for a moment. "The next practice match is tomorrow, with Squid."

The practice room quieted briefly at the mention of that team name. Xiao Bai, who was prattling on about something, also abruptly stopped talking and subconsciously frowned.

Yuan Qian was the first to speak. "Ding-*ge* … why did you agree to a practice match with them ah?"

Pine: "I don't want to play them either."

"They're one of the rare teams who go all out during a practice match. I want to try a new setup, so they're perfect to test it out on." Ding-*ge* said, "Don't be picky, it's just a practice match, it's the same as with anyone else. The schedule for the spring season is about to come out, so I have to hurry up and test its effectiveness beforehand."

Jian Rong didn't understand what was going on, and he couldn't resist asking, "What's wrong with them?"

Yuan Qian inquired, “You know this team, right?”

Jian Rong thought a bit and said honestly, “I only remember that their mid laner is an ATM[1].”

Yuan Qian: “…”

Jian Rong: “What exactly is their problem? Is there an issue with the way they play?”

“It’s not their playstyle…” Yuan Qian dithered. “Their team’s reputation isn’t very good.”

“As if they have a damn reputation.” Xiao Bai clicked his tongue. “They’re just bad and have dirty mouths, especially their team’s ADC—if the two of you were put together, then you would basically be like an angel descending to the mortal world to save mankind.”

Jian Rong said coldly, “I give you my thanks.”

“I’m serious.” Xiao Bai said, “At the most, you just roast someone’s gameplay during a competition. But all he does are personal attacks! He constantly shades other players’ appearances in his streams, and he was even fined for it recently by the LPL.”

Jian Rong searched through his memories. Squid’s ADC did seem to be fairly good-looking; every time during their competitions, the barrage was filled with squealing from fans of his face.

However, he only remembered the barrage. He didn't remember what the person himself looked like.

Ding-*ge* furrowed his brows. "I've already agreed, it's not like I can cancel last minute on them."

"Let's just play them then." Lu Boyuan said indifferently, "We'll still have to face off against them during competitions anyway. If you really dislike them, all you have to do is not interact with them when the time comes."

The next afternoon, the practice match with Squid went ahead as scheduled.

This match was mainly so they could practice a newly developed strategy. Xiao Bai and Pine were both on champions that they weren't good at, so they frequently made mistakes. Meanwhile, Squid directly used their competition team composition. In less than twenty minutes, the bot lane was starting to crumble.

Because the bot lane lost its momentum, Lu Boyuan's jungle was simultaneously invaded by the enemy ADC, jungler, and support. Jian Rong was being entangled by the enemy mid laner and couldn't go to assist.

Although Lu Boyuan's gameplay was superb and he wasn't ganked to death a single time, even stealing a Baron Nashor from the other team, they still lost the game at forty-eight minutes.

After they wiped during the last team fight, Jian Rong was about to withdraw from the game when he saw that the other team was continuing to tear down their base. A few seconds later, their Nexus exploded, and "DEFEAT" popped up on the screen.

“Dammit!” Xiao Bai cursed. “What are they doing? With the match history, won’t this strategy be leaked?”

Ding-*ge* hadn’t expected this to happen either. He frowned and called the captain of Squid. The other side gleefully apologized and offered to make amends, saying that the members got too into the game and accidentally destroyed the Nexus.

“Like hell.” After the phone call ended, Yuan Qian spat, “They can get too into the game when it’s just a practice match??”

Xiao Bai: “They’re still laughing around in the chat, I wanna throw up reading it.”

Everyone else left the game. Only Jian Rong was still in the custom game lobby.

Squid’s ADC had been talking the entire time.

[YY-Doufu[2]: Hahaha sorry sorry, my hand moved too fast, you guys aren’t angry right?]

[YY-Doufu: Qian-*ge*? Say something?]

[YY-Doufu: Qian-*ge*? Big fatty? Chubbers? Fatty?]

[YY-Doufu: Why’d you leave ah]

With a chilly expression, Jian Rong had already placed his hands on the keyboard.

“Jian Rong, pack up your stuff and go review the practice matches from these past few days.” Lu Boyuan picked up his equipment and stood up, his face mostly expressionless. As he passed by Ding-*ge*, he said, “Those two bot lane champions aren’t suited for the current meta. If they can’t even beat a team like that, this composition shouldn’t be used.”

With the strategy abandoned, the incident wasn’t that big of a deal anymore.

Everyone in TTC just thought of it as an annoying practice match, and after a few hours of feeling disgusted, they got over it.

But nobody expected a post to suddenly appear on a certain famous esports Tieba the next day.

The post’s subject was: [The result of TTC using a newbie mid laner: being crushed by Squid!]

A match history screenshot successfully gave rise to a discussion consisting of several hundred replies.

After TTC’s and Squid’s fans fought with each other and created a five hundred story building, the original poster also uploaded a video clip showing what Squid’s ADC Doufu had said last night in his stream—

– “Ah right, we had a practice match with TTC today.”

– “The new mid laner? Mn… haha, I’ll just leave it at that, it wouldn’t be good for me to keep going.”

– “We were just playing casually, we didn’t expect to win so easily.”

– “Ai, we got too into the game and couldn’t hold back, so we destroyed their Nexus, my fault.”

– “The mid laner himself? I haven’t seen him before, but I did hear that he doesn’t look as good as he does in his streams. Short and skinny, not much different from a monkey, right.”

– “I have seen Qian-*ge* recently, he’s still fat. Every time I see him, I can fast for two days.”

Jian Rong finished reading through this skyscraper while he brushed his teeth.

Notifications from the TTC’s Workout Club group chat continuously popped up at the top of his screen, but Jian Rong wasn’t in a hurry to click on them.

After he wiped his face dry with a towel, he opened Weibo and randomly selected a comment that he had received this morning.

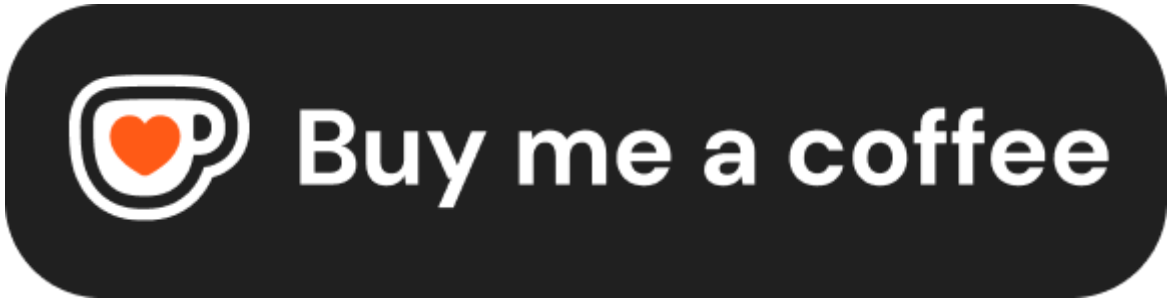
[I heard that you were crushed by Squid last night??]

Jian Rong clicked repost.

[TTC · Soft: What the hell is Squid again… oh, I remembered. The team that’s always beaten to a pulp during official competitions, making even their fans want to cover their eyes when they see it… are you talking about that practice – match – champion team?]

Translation Notes

1. *As in Jian Rong can just farm the hell out of him and get gold (like getting money from an ATM) LOL* ^
2. *For the sake of consistency (i.e. Shiliu/Hezi), I'll be leaving his name as Doufu, but it means Tofu* ^



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ICDI Chapter 31: Want to play against the practice match champion team.

Bonus Ko-fi chapter thanks to Kitty!

Today too, the esports circle was as lively as always.

The brawling between esports fans was no longer anything new, and there had also been many arguments between professional players before.

But a professional player who, after joining the team, publicly shaded another team before he had ever played in a single competition—this really was the first fucking time that had ever happened.

If this were any other person or any other team, Jian Rong would've long since been cursed to the heavens.

But out of everyone, this shady player was Soft.

Upon learning about this, the esports fans' first reaction wasn't anger or suspicion. Instead, it was an excited and even a bit hopeful—*is he going at it again??*

And this team also happened to be Squid, the team known for having the worst reputation in the LPL. Who knew how many players had been belittled by the people on this team while they cracked jokes. As a result, right now the other teams' fans shared the same sentiment as a certain image posted in Jian Rong's comment section:

[[watching the show.jpg]]

This comment was liked and pushed to the forefront by a crowd of other teams' fans who came to spectate. On the other hand, the comments flanking that one were—

[What trouble did my son cause now? It's not easy to start insulting if I don't know the situation, who's gonna give a summary?]

[That's it? That's it?? You're not even going to go through his family lineage?? Is Doufu your sworn brother, that's why you're giving him so much face??]

[Consider this as Dad begging you, please start flaming. I'll help you pay that 10k yuan, is that still no good?]

[I'll pay 100k, you can unleash a few more insults, send me your Alipay]

[How interesting, is it not a fact that they easily beat you guys in the practice match? All they did was accidentally destroy the Nexus. What, afraid that other people will see that trash match score? If you're gonna be a sore loser, then don't schedule practice matches, OK?]

[No way no way, even a brainless team like Squid has fans?? What, is it because it's been too long since someone played a practice match with your team that they even forgot what the rules were?]

[Is the point of a practice match to win? And also TTC was clearly practicing a new bot lane team comp ah?]

["Easily"? All of Squid was using the team comp from their summer season knockouts, someone who didn't know better would think that last night was the spring season finals. Just that still took 48 mins, only Doufu can spout some BS like 'winning easily.' And he also constantly goes around shading other people's appearances and bodies. Despite the way that his horse face looks, I have yet to see anyone tell him to scram back to the zoo?]

[@YY-Doufu your team won the practice match, but your [horse head[1]] is gone, worth it?]

"Never mind about the rest, at least this Weibo post didn't have any profanity, so it isn't at the point where it would be fined." Ding-*ge* supported himself using Yuan Qian's chair, looking like he would collapse from anger at any moment. "—but why did you go and like that 'worth it' comment??"

Jian Rong was playing ranked, and he didn't turn around. He said, very insincerely, "My hand slipped."

Ding-*ge*: "……"

Jian Rong asked, "Is there a penalty for a slip of the hand?"

Ding-*ge*: "…no."

Sitting at the side, Xiao Bai raised an eyebrow and nodded when he heard that before letting out a long "oh."

Ding-*ge*: "…what's that '*now I get it*' expression on your face supposed to mean?"

“Nothing.” Xiao Bai cleared his throat. “But logically speaking, I don’t think Jian Rong really did anything wrong this time. They were the ones who decided not to follow the rules first. Forget about destroying our Nexus, he also acted like a prick in his stream, saying they won easily and commenting on Jian Rong and Qian-*ge*’s figures. His stream’s barrage last night was full of personal attacks. It’s one thing if he didn’t block them after seeing it, but he even kept responding and conversing with them… P-baby, don’t you think this person deserves to be insulted?”

There were headphones hanging around Pine’s neck, and he said concisely, “Yes.”

“It actually doesn’t really matter to me. He can say what he wants, it’s not like he held back before.” Yuan Qian paused. “I just dislike seeing his cocky energy.”

“Exactly. He said Jian Rong looked like a monkey, but has he seen a blue-furred monkey before?” Xiao Bai said, “And he called Jian Rong short, what’s wrong with being short? Is Doufu’s son gonna inherit it? No matter how short Jian Rong is, he’s still a thousand times more handsome and adorable than Doufu, okay?”

Jian Rong pretended the enemy laner was Xiao Bai and killed them while contemplating whether to curse out a “*your mom’s short*” or a *“your mom’s a monkey*.”

Xiao Bai: “—isn’t that right, *ge*?”

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of watching a recording of some random competition, and he only answered lazily a few seconds later. “Not short, he’s still growing.”

Jian Rong swallowed down his curses again.

“I’m not saying that there’s nothing wrong with Squid. In the first place, they’re a team with many issues.” Ding-*ge* frowned. “I already took care of things last night. In the future, no strong teams will agree to play practice matches with them—there were obviously ten thousand different ways to resolve this matter, but now that that Weibo post is out, the situation has become serious.”

The game finished, and Jian Rong looked back to ask, “Why?”

“Not mentioning the other negative effects that this could potentially lead to in the future, I’ll just bring up the one that’s the soonest… do you know what’s happening next week?” Ding-*ge* paused for two seconds. “The spring season’s opening ceremony.

“We have fifteen games during the spring season, consisting of a single round robin with each of the other fifteen teams. That means that you’ll run into Squid very soon. If you don’t perform well during that match, do you know what the outcome will be?

“Being ridiculed by antis is a given, but more than that, it’ll strike a blow on our fans’ morale. You’re also a newcomer in the team, so some fans would even take their anger out on you unjustly and blame you for arguing with Squid when you couldn’t beat them.” At that, Ding-*ge* sighed. “Those anti-

fans have the best memories, so it won't end with just the spring season. In the future, they'll pay attention to every single match that you play against Squid. Have you considered these things before?"

After he finished talking, Jian Rong stared at the floor quietly for a few seconds. "No."

Jian Rong's eyelashes were long, and his features still somewhat gave off the tender, youthful feeling of a teenager. When he lowered his eyes, he really did have a certain 'well-behaved kid' aura.

Ding-*ge* thought that Jian Rong was regretting and reflecting. He felt like he had spoken too harshly, so he reached out, wanting to pat his shoulder and comfort him a bit. "However—"

"Then won't it be fine as long as I always win?" Jian Rong lifted his head and asked in return, looking completely unperturbed.

"That's right." Xiao Bai said, "Last year, during the official competition, Squid didn't beat us a single time."

Ding-*ge*'s arm froze midair before he shamefully withdrew it.

He had worried too much.

Lu Boyuan closed the video and asked, "When is the spring season's competition schedule coming out?"

Hearing that, the others also turned to look at Ding-*ge*.

Last year, the spring season altered its rules: no longer splitting into groups, single round robin, BO3.

Since every team would encounter each other during the season, and only once at that, there was no longer a need to draw lots; the LPL would directly announce the schedule.

"It's tonight, at seven." Ding-*ge* glanced expressionlessly at the time. "You guys really know how to pick a good time to argue. Normally, no one would be paying attention to this schedule… but now all the esports fans are praying that we'll run into Squid for our very first game, as faithfully as if this were their favorite team winning the championship."

—

The spring season's viewership had always been lower than the summer season. Adding on the fact that this was just the regular season and not the playoffs, not many fans paid attention.

In order to increase the season's popularity, the LPL contacted each major team in the hopes that they could stream the reading of the schedule.

As a result, that night at 6:40 p.m., Lu Boyuan started streaming. All the other members moved their chairs over and sat around him. Jian Rong got there fast and snatched the spot right next to Lu Boyuan.

Every time Lu Boyuan turned on his stream, the majority of the comments in the barrage were always "*husband, you're here*" or "*husband, I'm here*."

Jian Rong also had this kind of treatment, but his comments were more like "*dumbass, you're here*" or "*your dad is here*."

[Husband, are you going to be playing later~~]

[I want to see you and Soft play bot lane again.]

Lu Boyuan said, "Won't be playing, there's a practice match later. I'll be turning off the stream after we see the schedule."

[Darling Pine, come sit a little closer so I can see you QAQ why isn't Pine streaming?]

[Xiao Bai do you mind staying away from my Pine!!]

"Didn't you hear what my *ge* said? We have a practice match later, P-baby won't be able to stream." After Xiao Bai said that, he reached out and threw his arm around Pine's shoulders. "I won't, I'm gonna stick to him."

[Qian-*ge*, be happy, don't get mad for a dumbass like Doufu.]

Yuan Qian chuckled. "I'm not mad."

[Dumbass, you're here to mooch off Road's stream again? Because of you, *laozi* muddled around and got a fan icon for this livestream room.]

[When is the schedule coming out? Right now I feel like an old father waiting for his son to be assigned to a class.]

[Jian Rong, when you're backstage during the spring season, you better not get in a fight with Doufu ah. With your physique, you won't be able to win.

Dad will help you curse him out online.]

[Actually, it's not that bad to change livestream rooms. Before this bluenette would constantly ban my accounts in his stream, *laozi* must have freaking created eight or ten side accounts by now.]

With a wooden expression, Jian Rong was about to pretend that he didn't see that when someone suddenly moved the computer mouse over to him.

Lu Boyuan's tone was casual. "Ban whoever you want to ban."

The barrage: "…???"

At first, Jian Rong didn't want to interfere with Lu Boyuan's stream, but after he stared at the other person's mouse for a few seconds, his hand still reached out and gripped it very honestly. He banned those dumbasses who kept calling him short from speaking.

[Even though you guys will encounter every team, I still want to ask, what team do you all want to play against first ah~]

They didn't even need to answer that. The barrage was instantly drowned out by the word "Squid."

Lu Boyuan didn't reply. He pulled up the official LoL Esports webpage and got ready to wait for the schedule's release before he looked over and asked Jian Rong, "For your very first match, what team do you want to play against?"

Jian Rong met his eyes for two seconds before he swiftly shifted his gaze away again. He said stiffly, “Want to play against the practice match champion team.”

The others were all restraining their laughter, and countless “*hahaha*” and “*666*” also floated across the barrage. Only Ding-*ge* flew into a rage by himself off-camera.

Lu Boyuan also laughed. He pressed F5 one more time, and the page refreshed again, successfully revealing a new competition schedule.

He shifted his mouse, and before his teammates and the audience could react, he had already rapidly scrolled down the page.

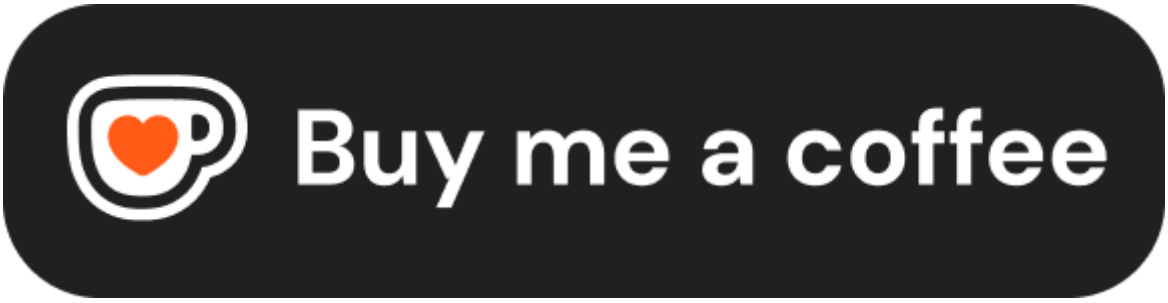
Amidst the laughter and bantering, a familiar team icon and a large row of words entered everyone’s vision—

[(Match #1) January 12, 17:00, Monday: TTC vs Squid[2]]

Translation Notes

1. *A very layered insult here lmao. On one hand it’s like insulting Doufu because they just implied he has a horse face. On the other hand, horse in Chinese is pronounced “ma,” which sounds like Mom (also ma), and the phrase is a popular insult that basically means “your mom is dead.”* ^
2. *For the sake of suspense, I made it Squid, but the English name for Squid is actually YY (Squid = you yu). In the future if they say YY I’ll use YY, but if they say you yu, I’ll translate it as Squid* ^

Yan: We'll be entering ~competition season~ soonnn hehe. Also just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who keeps giving us ko-fis and making these bonus chapters possible >_< we really never imagined people would want to see the next chapters so quickly hahaha but we're very grateful!!



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ICDI Chapter 32: “Dumbass.”

For a moment, Ding-*ge* didn’t know if Jian Rong had become a prophet or if it was the LPL purposefully causing trouble.

The barrage flew by too fast, and the water friends who came late had no choice but to turn off the comments in order to see the competition schedule clearly—

[Fff they’re really playing Squid? This is way too exciting!!!]

[Originally I wasn’t very interested in the spring season, but now I’ve decided to snap up an admission ticket. Son, just wait and see how Dad will support you.]

[Ahhh husband destroy this dumbass Doufu!!]

[They’re really going up against each other? This is peak drama, the LPL is amazing.]

[Hehe, keep laughing, dumbass TTC fans. If YY pulls an upset and wins the match, Tieba will make fun of this for ten years.]

[YY winning a match? It’s faster just to dream.]

“Enough.” Ding-*ge* glanced at the clock and signaled from behind the computer that they should stop the stream.

After turning the stream off, they walked towards the practice room. Xiao Bai patted Jian Rong’s shoulder only to find that he actually felt

unexpectedly tense.

He was startled, but before he could say anything, Jian Rong looked back and asked, “What do you want?”

Xiao Bai lowered his voice. “Tell me a string of numbers.”

Jian Rong frowned. “For what?”

“So I can buy a lottery ticket… hey, don’t go.”

In that night’s practice match, everyone in TTC played very radically, especially Jian Rong.

As long as Ding-*ge* didn’t tell him to practice a specific champion, Jian Rong could pick whatever champion he wanted.

MFG helplessly watched as TTC pulled out mid lane Talon, ADC Draven, and top lane Tryndamere…

They were all freaking high-damage glass cannons, the gutter champions[1] that basically never showed up in competitive play.

Kongkong had picked a teamfight champion that was weak in the early game. As a result, he was solo killed twice by mid lane Talon early on, and then he was ganked twice again by Talon mid game in the jungle. Even though Kongkong’s team ultimately won the match, he felt more like he had just experienced twenty consecutive losses in ranked.

After the practice match, Kongkong couldn’t help but send Jian Rong a message.

[Kongkong: Bro, Doufu was the one who screwed you, not me. Go screw him instead pls.]

Jian Rong only saw this message twenty minutes later, and he replied with a simple “OK” before he put down his phone and continued to play ranked.

[Kongkong: Taking so long to reply, what a busy bee you are ah.]

[R-ong: Was playing ranked earlier.]

[Kongkong: Duo Q?]

[R-ong: Solo]

[Kongkong: Then Q together?]

[Kongkong: I’m not streaming, it won’t reveal what champions you’re training.]

Jian Rong didn’t actually care whether any champions were revealed. He could play all the champions.

[R-ong: How can two mids Q together?]

[Kongkong: You just haven’t witnessed how strong my jungler is. Invite me.]

After joining the party, Kongkong said, “I thought that you would be duo queueing with a teammate.”

Jian Rong said that he wasn’t.

Originally, he did want to duo queue with a teammate.

But right after they finished the practice match, Ding-*ge* brought over a person who was carrying a little wooden box on his back.

That person chatted quietly a bit with Lu Boyuan before the two of them went into a meeting room together. A while later, Lu Boyuan came out and returned to his own room without looking back.

Jian Rong played all the way until four in the morning. Everyone else had gone to sleep already; only he was still there saving his teammates in the Summoner's Rift.

Another game ended, and he was about to start matching again when Kongkong yawned on the other side. He couldn't endure any longer and said, "Enough, bro. Let's go to sleep, it's already 4:30."

In reality, Kongkong had started to get sleepy long ago, but seeing as Jian Rong had continued to silently start the next match, Kongkong had just tolerated it without saying anything.

Jian Rong glanced at the time. "You can go."

Kongkong: "You're still gonna play??"

Jian Rong gave an "en." "For a bit."

Kongkong went quiet for a beat before he asked, "Bro, do you usually practice until this late, or is it just because the pressure's on since you're about to fight Squid?"

Jian Rong took a sip of his coffee.

The instant coffee didn't taste as good as the coffee Lu Boyuan made, but he was truly too lazy to try and figure out that coffee machine thing.

Actually, in the past, Jian Rong had never really felt any pressure when playing this game. After all, for a streamer, the entertainment factor was much more important than the strength level in a game.

But today, the instant that the competition schedule had come out and Jian Rong had seen that "*if you lose Tieba will mock you for ten years*" comment, the only thought left in his head was—he must not lose.

The reason Ding-*ge* didn't say anything was probably because he was worried that Jian Rong would feel pressured.

Jian Rong was used to being cursed, but he couldn't let TTC and his teammates be mocked for ten years because of him.

"That's also fair." Hearing no response, Kongkong mused aloud, "Since it's your debut, after all. During my first match, I was so nervous that my whole body was covered in sweat in the middle of winter. But don't you worry, I feel like Squid's mid laner can't beat you."

Jian Rong said, "I know."

Kongkong: "…"

Do you know how to fucking write the word 'humble.'

"But it's not just that I want to win," Jian Rong said.

Kongkong: "Then what?"

Jian Rong didn't reply. Instead, he asked, "Are you going to sleep or not? If not, I'm starting a game."

Kongkong said, "If you want to queue, I can still hang in there for a few more rounds…"

"Well, it's not that I want to queue. Your jungler is a bit better than a stranger's." Jian Rong said, "I can insult you through voice chat, and I won't be caught by a patrolling LPL employee."

Kongkong: "……"

The LPL Discipline Committee checked the players' accounts, strictly inspecting whether or not a player insulted someone, AFKed, or threw the game during ranked play.

In the end, Kongkong still chose to preserve his life and sleep. Right before he left, he said, "…Squid relies on their bot lane during competitions. Their mid laner is actually just so-so. He likes playing with Syndra and Zoe, and he's pretty strong in early game, kind of like you. But he shouldn't play as well as you do, so you can drag it out to late game before slaughtering him."

Jian Rong paused, and quite a few seconds passed before he said, "Thanks."

Jian Rong practiced until dawn and went back to his room to take a shower and sleep right before the auntie came to the base.

But he ended up opening his eyes again after sleeping for only a few hours. He saw that it wasn't even nine yet, meaning that he hadn't even slept a full

three hours.

Jian Rong laid there for a few more minutes before he got out of bed and washed up. He then went downstairs with a bird's nest on his head.

Originally, he was just intending to eat some bread to fill his stomach, but the auntie insisted on frying an egg for him and making noodles.

After being fed to her satisfaction, Jian Rong returned to the practice room and continued to train.

What an auspicious beginning. Right off the bat, Jian Rong encountered dumbass teammates for four games in a row, pissing him off so much that his brain ached. Finally, in the fifth game, after he met a jungler teammate who fed the other team three times in ten minutes, he decided to take a break for a few minutes and play on his phone for a while. That way, he wouldn't be tempted to add this jungler as a friend and take his head.

As Jian Rong messed around, he eventually clicked into his WeChat conversation with Lu Boyuan.

Jian Rong had already browsed through Lu Boyuan's Moments many times before.

Lu Boyuan didn't have much activity, and his Moments consisted only of a scant few pictures. There were photos of food and the seascape, but most of them were still of that little teacup pig from his profile picture. It seemed to be a pet that Lu Boyuan was raising at home.

Even though Jian Rong knew that the other person hadn't posted anything new, he still couldn't resist the urge to take a peek at Lu Boyuan's Moments. He leaned back in his chair and lazily poked at the little teacup pig in his profile picture—

[You've patted R]

Jian Rong: "?"

What the hell?

I patted who??

Jian Rong, who never looked at the app update contents, stared at that tiny line of words, dumbfounded.

At the speed of light, he typed a question into Baidu. After he read the "take a pat" explanation, he was even more dumbfounded.

Was there something wrong with the WeChat team?

With this kind of energy go improve the chat history function instead of making decisions on your own all the time and help *laozi* clean up his photo cache okay?

What the hell was the purpose of this function besides allowing couples to flirt with each other and making people feel awkward???

A few seconds later, Jian Rong pressed down on that line of text, wanting to see if he could withdraw it or not—

Buzz.

[R has patted you.]

[R: ?]

[R-ong: .]

Jian Rong rubbed his face in despair.

[R: Need something?]

[R-ong: No.]

[R: Then why are you patting.]

[R-ong: …]

[R-ong: Just want to ask you to duo Q.]

The other side didn’t answer for a long time.

Jian Rong glanced at the time; it was ten.

Only a moron would ask a professional esports player to duo queue at ten in the morning on a practice day.

Jian Rong closed his eyes, and he had already cursed out WeChat until it went bankrupt in his mind.

[R-ong: I can also solo Q, you should rest]

This time, he got a new reply only a few seconds later after the message was sent out.

It was a voice message. Propping up his head, Jian Rong moved the phone next to his ear and pressed on it.

The first thing he heard was the sound of water. The man's voice contained a hoarseness from feeling sleepy. "Hold on, washing my face."

When Lu Boyuan entered the practice room, he was holding two large packages that he had just picked up from the doorway.

Jian Rong had already sat there embarrassedly by himself for a while. When he heard the noise, he braced himself and turned his head, wanting to explain a bit, only to see two packages appear on his computer desk.

Jian Rong was slightly startled. "What?"

"Open it up and take a look." Lu Boyuan carried the peppermint scent of his toothpaste on him.

Jian Rong tore open the packaging. Inside was a new keyboard.

The design was the same as Lu Boyuan's, and the only thing that had changed was the color and keycaps. He subconsciously flipped it over, and sure enough, there was a "*Soft*" engraved on the back.

Not many esports youths could resist the lure of high-end peripherals. Even a little miser like Jian Rong had clenched his teeth and bought a pair of headphones and a keyboard costing four digits total once his wages had

surpassed 10,000 yuan. What's more, his own ID was printed on this keyboard.

He swiftly lifted his head, his eyes shining. "Did the bankroller daddy sponsor this?"

Lu Boyuan was quiet for a few seconds and didn't answer the question. "It's the same model as the one you're using right now. Switch it out and see if it works for you or not."

Jian Rong nodded. After he picked the new keyboard up out of the box, he recalled something else and asked, "Then what should I do with the one I'm using right now?"

"Whatever you want. Let's put it in the cabinet."

Lu Boyuan returned to his own seat and, after playing two duo queue games together, the way Jian Rong had looked when he raised his head to ask Lu Boyuan a question just now floated through his mind again.

Jian Rong had looked just like a kid who had received candy, trying to restrain his happiness and hold back his smile. At the same time, he wasn't able to hide anything, all of it written in his eyes.

A rare expression that, for some inexplicable reason, put Lu Boyuan in a good mood when he saw it.

—

The match with Squid, who they had just dissed, was right around the corner. Even though no one in TTC said anything openly, they were all secretly practicing more during this time.

After a tense, highly strung period passed, they finally arrived at the first day of the spring season.

This time, the roster that TTC registered for the spring season was pretty much the same as the previous summer season; only Kan had been swapped out for Soft. The subs were still mid laner Hezi and jungler Moon.

Jian Rong wasn't close with either of these substitutes. Afterwards, he had rejected Hezi every time he asked to solo, and he had never once spoken to Moon before.

He changed into his uniform, went downstairs, and just happened to see both substitutes enter the room. After Moon finished greeting everyone, he walked over to Lu Boyuan and greeted, "Captain."

Lu Boyuan glanced at him. "Mn."

There were a lot of empty seats around Lu Boyuan, but Moon didn't sit down. He furtively snuck a few looks around before he spoke again. "Captain, I've been practicing extra recently. If I have an opportunity to play again someday… what happened last time definitely won't happen again."

Lu Boyuan chuckled and said okay.

When Moon saw that laugh, he seemed to gain some more courage, and he wanted to say something else.

“When are we leaving?” Jian Rong spoke leisurely.

“Soon.” Right after Ding-*ge* said that, he got a phone call. He said after hanging up, “The car’s here, let’s go.”

Jian Rong walked at the very back.

After Xiao Bai finished putting on his shoes, he saw that Jian Rong was still standing in the entrance. Xiao Bai raised an eyebrow and asked, “We’re leaving ah, what are you zoning out for?”

At that, Lu Boyuan shot a look back.

Jian Rong said nonchalantly, “I forgot to get something. You guys go ahead, I’ll be right there.”

One minute later, Jian Rong stood in the doorway and peered around, confirming that everyone was gone.

He retreated back to the entrance hall and fished out the new toy that he had bought for the first time, secretly stuffing it into the depths of his shoes.

Today, they were driving the team bus. This was actually Jian Rong’s first time sitting in the team’s charter bus. Not only was the exterior low-key and stylish, even the interior was much more high-end than that of a normal charter bus.

After arriving at the stadium, Jian Rong stuffed two pieces of gum inside his mouth before getting out of the bus.

On their way to the stadium's backstage area, Xiao Bai walked side by side with Jian Rong. Halfway there, Xiao Bai glanced at him, puzzled.

A few beats later, he turned his head and took another look at him.

After this happened several times, Xiao Bai couldn't help but speak up and call for Lu Boyuan, who was walking ahead of them. "*Ge*."

Lu Boyuan stopped and looked back.

Because the person in front of him stopped, Jian Rong had no choice but to stop walking too. Unexpectedly, Xiao Bai suddenly reached out and pushed him very gently on the back. Jian Rong was caught off guard and took a step forward, nearly plastering himself to Lu Boyuan's back.

Jian Rong blurted, "Are you crazy…"

"Were you always this tall before?" Xiao Bai asked.

Jian Rong instantly went silent.

"I remember that you were only up to here on my *ge* before…" Xiao Bai extended a hand and gestured. "Now you're almost at my *ge*'s temple."

When Lu Boyuan heard that, he lowered his eyes and glanced at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong wrote '*endure*' ten thousand times in his mind.

"Is that so?" Jian Rong's voice was mostly flat. "You must've remembered wrong."

Xiao Bai: "No way?"

Jian Rong grinded his teeth. “In that case, I grew taller.”

Xiao Bai was astonished. “Ah, can you grow that fast…”

“Enough, why are you guys just chatting around and blocking the way?!” Ding-*ge* said from behind them. “You’re blocking the staff’s way, hurry up and go!”

Jian Rong stared at Lu Boyuan’s nape and chewed on the gum in his mouth, pretending that it was Xiao Bai.

Right when they were about to reach the break room, they met a row of people head-on.

Squid was full of skinny people—or else they wouldn’t be mocking other people’s figures all day long.

When they saw TTC, Squid’s members were also startled.

Both coaches wore serious expressions, already prepared to stop a fight at any time.

Unexpectedly, Lu Boyuan didn’t even spare them a second glance and brushed past with a cold look on his face.

Doufu was standing at the very front of Squid.

At his core, Doufu wasn’t some benevolent being. He had long since wanted to speak out and insult Soft back, but his coach had been one step faster than him and had changed his Weibo password. Doufu had also been

forced to reflect for half a night before he finally had no choice but to endure it.

Now that they were meeting in person, Doufu subconsciously put on a sneering, cocky expression and decided to unleash a few ambiguously shady lines.

Who would've thought that Lu Boyuan would just unhesitatingly walk away like that? As for that bluenette behind Lu Boyuan—

?

Sensing that something about the height was off, Doufu looked Jian Rong up and down a few times.

Before Doufu could snap out of it, Jian Rong had already walked over to him.

The youth was chewing gum, and he shot a chilly glance over, ridicule and disdain clear in his gaze. As he passed by, he breezily spat out a single word. His voice was very quiet, so that only the two of them could hear it.

"Dumbass."

—

The author has something to say:

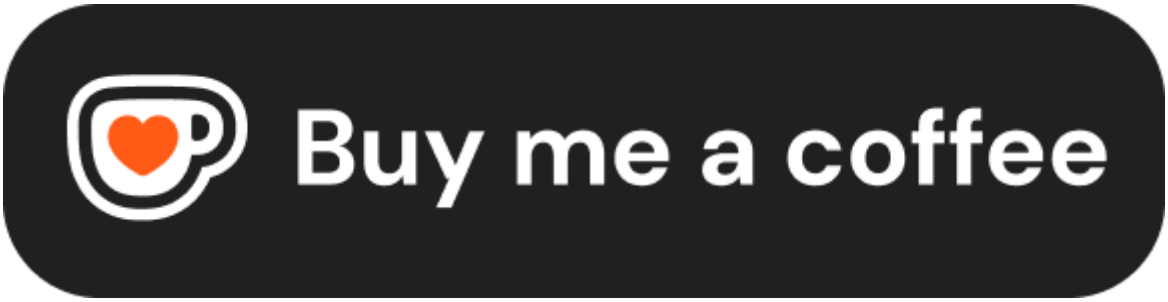
R-ong, you're such a badass.

Translation Notes

1. *Refers to champions that have been nerfed/are no longer meta* ^

Yan: Technically the word the author uses in the author's note isn't 'badass,' it's more like... how coolly arrogant of you, Rongrong. But it's hard to find an English equivalent. (Seriously though, Jian Rong has some big balls to say that at the competition site LOL)

Wei: ...Rong Rong... I can't believe you bought heel lifts to make yourself look taller LOL desperate times desperate measures I guess??



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ICDI Chapter 33: [If you beat Doufu you're the boss, if you lose then don't bother Dad and get lost.]

"He called me a dumbass!!"

In Squid's break room, Doufu said with a reddened neck, "Did none of you guys hear it??"

His teammates shared a look. The coach said, "Maybe you're too nervous and imagined it…"

"Would I imagine someone calling me a dumbass??" Doufu was so pissed that he laughed.

"Then what?" The team's manager frowned. "Don't tell me that you're going to report it to the LPL and say, '*When Soft passed me he secretly called me a dumbass even though nobody else heard it, I swear it's true can you please penalize him*'?"

Doufu: "…"

Choking back his resentment made him feel uncomfortable all over, and simultaneously, he was angry at himself for being shocked into silence just now after being insulted, resulting in him not being able to retort immediately. Who the hell would've expected Soft to dare to curse at someone backstage at the competition right after he ate a penalty notice.

“Didn’t you say that he was really short?” Doufu interrogated his support. “In reality he’s even taller than me?”

Squid’s support said innocently, “I’ve never seen him in person before either ah, I just saw that all his fans say he’s from the dwarf kingdom… it’s probably because those other people in TTC are too tall, so in comparison he looks shorter?”

“Enough, enough.” The manager interrupted them. “The camera crew is about to come in. If you’re going to talk, then do it back at the base. Doufu, you just got a penalty ticket last season, restrain yourself a little and don’t make trouble. If you end up getting suspended, then nobody needs to think about playing anymore.”

In TTC’s break room.

“I almost went and punched him just now!” Xiao Bai rolled up his sleeves, showing off his meaty fist. “Good thing I held back.”

Pine took off his hat. “Oh really, how come from my point of view you didn’t even dare to meet Doufu’s eyes then.”

“What BS!”

Today was the opening ceremony for the spring season, so even the LPL teams that weren’t competing today arrived at the competition venue.

Someone knocked on the break room’s door, and a staff member peeked in to inform them that the opening ceremony would be starting in ten minutes.

Before the competition began, every participating team had to send a player to represent them on stage for the opening ceremony. The chosen player was usually the team's core, and naturally, their team representative was Lu Boyuan.

The makeup artist stepped forward carrying a bag, but Lu Boyuan rejected it.

"Can't stand the smell, no makeup."

The makeup artist didn't take offense and glanced back at Ding-*ge*. Ding-*ge* said, "Whatever he wants, it's the same whether he does it or not."

Not long after Lu Boyuan followed the staff member out, the livestream was connected.

Jian Rong looked up from his phone and watched the television screen as every major team's representative was introduced onstage.

The order for entering was based on last season's rankings, and the higher the placement, the later they came on. Since they were all the teams' core players, the cheers in the arena continued wave after wave, never stopping a single time.

After they finished introducing the first fourteen teams, the stadium's atmosphere reached its peak.

The host's voice was loud and clear. "Next, entering the stage is our LPL's veteran, top-ranked team, TTC, Road—"

Instantly, the screams overturned the roof, so excessive that they could even hear it clearly backstage. His popularity surpassed the other players' by several times.

Lu Boyuan walked out from backstage, the camera focused on his face. An unknowing passerby would even think that the event had changed to some runway show.

As the host gave his introduction, he walked over to the position that had been arranged in advance. His shoulders were broad and his legs were long, and he looked like a crane amidst a flock of chickens when he stood next to the other professional players, completely superior.

Prior to this, when Jian Rong watched the competitions, he would always drag it out until the actual matches began before he started streaming. He had never watched any opening ceremony before.

Now, he sat there hugging his equipment bag, his chin slightly raised as he very earnestly watched the proceedings.

"Too tragic, Kongkong is too tragic. He actually got placed next to my *ge*." Xiao Bai shook his head and clicked his tongue before he turned his head to discover Jian Rong staring at the television unblinkingly. He said, "Jian Rong, look, isn't the atmosphere of your debut grand enough?"

The camera switched to PUD's core top laner 98K as he walked on stage.

Jian Rong retracted his gaze and lowered his head to play with his phone. "It's not my atmosphere."

Lu Boyuan came back very soon. After the players exited the stage, the commentators immediately took their positions.

Yuan Qian was in the middle of playing Fight the Landlord[1]. He raised his eyes and was startled when he glimpsed Jian Rong's phone screen. "Xiao Rong, we're about to compete and you're still looking at Weibo… aren't you just psyching yourself out."

Ding-*ge*'s gaze swept over like a machine gun.

"I'm just taking a look, they won't affect my mentality."

Right after Jian Rong said that, he came across a new comment.

[Love Doufufu The Most: What a joke, you only dare to say something rude because you're relying on the fact that you have a teammate like Road, right? Who knows if TTC got blinded when they were searching for a new mid laner, or if they just temporarily found someone to round out the numbers? And also, even if TTC wins this match, it won't have anything to do with a dumbass streamer like you? Doufu always carries match after match, earning MVP until his hands are tired from accepting it. Can a fake streamer like you do that?]

Ding-*ge* clapped and said that it was time. He told them to tidy up their clothing and get ready to go on stage.

Jian Rong typed a few words in reply before he handed his phone off to Ding-*ge* and followed Lu Boyuan out.

It was one thing to watch a competition from in front of his computer, and it was a completely different matter to actually sit on the stage.

Jian Rong's first reaction when he went up was: it's bright.

The lights everywhere else were dimmed; only their competition stage was lit up.

What Jian Rong didn't know was just how diverse the official livestream's barrage became the moment he appeared on stage—

[Ahhh God Lu is so handsome today as well, I'm licking licking licking QAQ]

[WTF, Soft doesn't look any different from the way he does in his streams?? I always thought that he had on a beauty filter…]

[This bluenette – really blinding.]

[How come I feel like something's a little off about this dumbass today?]

[Me too! But I can't pinpoint it.]

[…grew taller?]

[Damn, he really did get taller. That's impossible, before this dumbass only reached Lu Boyuan's waist…]

[Ah? Isn't it too much of an exaggeration to say the waist? How do you all even know.]

[I saw that picture where he was being carried like a dead pig by Road.]

[There's no way he can grow so much all at once, not even a pig can have a growth spurt like this!]

[This won't do, let me go check out that photo again.]

…

Jian Rong stared fixedly ahead all the way until he got to the seat in the very middle, which belonged exclusively to the mid laner. He pulled out the chair and sat down before putting on his headphones.

During every competitive match, the seating was fixed according to the order of top laner, jungler, mid laner, ADC, and support. As a result, Lu Boyuan and Pine were both sitting next to Jian Rong.

Jian Rong sat there for half a minute before he couldn't help but furtively tilt his head and glance to the side.

Lu Boyuan's sleeves were pulled up to his elbows, and his eyes were lowered as he inspected the competition account.

His fingers rested on the keyboard without using force. One time when a cameraman was filming a close-up shot, they had given Lu Boyuan's hands a special feature. After that, the special feature had been screenshotted by the fans and had been widely circulated. Every time a popular topic about "hand control" appeared on the internet, Lu Boyuan's picture would show up without fail.

"Jian Rong." Lu Boyuan's voice came through his headphones.

Jian Rong subconsciously answered, “Ah.”

“You can’t look at me like this during a competition,” Lu Boyuan explained mildly. “You’ll be called out for spying on a teammate’s screen.”

“…” Jian Rong shamefully and stiffly turned his head forward again. After quite a long pause, he said, “Okay.”

Once Jian Rong finished inspecting the game account, he heard Yuan Qian say, “Xiao Rong, the match hasn’t started yet, so you can wear your headphones a bit more loosely.”

Jian Rong asked, “Why?”

“That way you can hear what the commentators are saying.”

After receiving his teammate’s reminder, Jian Rong got a bad feeling. He slightly tugged off his headphones and heard his own ID.

Commentator A: “People probably aren’t very familiar with TTC’s new mid laner. Before, Soft was a streamer, but it’s clear from his promotion straight to a starting position after signing with TTC that this new player’s strength is impressive. Today can be considered Soft’s debut match, opposing the other veteran team YY. I feel like there are still a few things to look forward to in this match—”

“Be careful of what you say, what do you mean by ‘a few’? Everyone has been looking forward to this match ever since the competition schedule was announced, okay?” Commentator B paused after saying that. “Actually, I personally have a very deep impression of Soft.”

Commentator A: “Oh? Why is that?”

“…as everybody knows, Soft often ‘analyzes’ professional players in his streams.” Commentator B smiled. “In fact, his scope of business is quite wide. I’ve had the fortune… to be analyzed by him before too.”

Commentator A was amused, and he asked curiously, “What did he analyze?”

“During the previous spring season, there was a match where I accidentally had a slip of the tongue a few times. In his stream, Soft proposed a valuable suggestion to our LoL commentator division.” Commentator B said, “He amicably raised an inquiry to the division, asking why they dared to allow a temporary worker go on stage and commentate on an official competition.”

The entire stadium roared with laughter.

Jian Rong: “.”

“Just who exactly have you not provoked before? Have you analyzed the hosts before?” Yuan Qian laughed and said, “I feel like the commentator is going to make things difficult for you now.”

There was a huge video camera in front of Jian Rong, and he said expressionlessly, “Up to him.”

Commentator A: “Pfft… Soft truly is a player with quite a personality. Not only that, but his fans also have a very unique style. For example, their support banners that they made for Soft today…”

It was too obvious that Commentator A was trying to hold back his laughter, to the point that everyone else couldn't help but glance towards the audience.

Support banners?

Just what kind of support banners could that group of dumbasses from his livestream room have?

With that doubt in mind, Jian Rong also looked towards the audience. After he saw his own support banners, he felt like he had been struck by lightning and charred on the spot.

If they were talking about support, then Lu Boyuan's fans were still the strongest. All sixteen teams were at the stadium today, but Lu Boyuan's support banners still occupied half of the space.

Jian Rong had very few "fans," but his support banners were more amazing than anyone else's. Amidst a crowd of "*LPL's #1 Jungler Road*," "*Road is on the way,*" "*TTC get off work earlier*," and "*Doufu baby fighting,*" his fans rose above all the rest—

[Daddy's here, play well.]

[You're the wildest in this field so green, you're the dwarf kingdom's ultimate king.]

[Tonight there are only two endings for Soft: winning or deleting his account]

[If you beat Doufu you're the boss, if you lose then don't bother Dad and get lost.]

…

Jian Rong withdrew his gaze and asked seriously, "Can I tell security to kick someone out?"

"You cannot." Ding-*ge* laughed in spite of himself. "Enough, it's about to start. Play well so you don't have to delete your account."

Two minutes later, both teams verified that their equipment and accounts were in good condition, and the game entered the pick/ban phase.

"Who to ban?" Yuan Qian asked, as he was the first to ban in their team.

As one of the LPL's top teams, not only did TTC have outstanding players, they also possessed formidable coaches.

The notebook in Ding-*ge*'s hands contained the fruit of the coaches' labor, after they stayed up late for many days watching video recordings and researching.

He said, "The first three should prioritize banning Aphelios, Ezreal, and Zoe. Only Squid's bot lane is relatively troublesome, so we'll focus on targeting them. This round's counterpick will be Jian Rong's."

Counterpicking referred to how the very last person to go could choose to ban a champion advantageously for their own team or for the purpose of restricting their opponents, based on the other side's team composition.

Squid banned Lee Sin, Nidalee, and LeBlanc.

Xiao Bai clicked his tongue. “How come these people always ban the same champions every time?”

Yuan Qian chuckled. “Don’t think about it anymore. As long as the current meta doesn’t change, these two champs will probably end up staying banned for another season again.”

Lee Sin and Nidalee were the jungler champions that Lu Boyuan was best at. For every single team that they competed against, these two champions were almost always banned.

Especially Lee Sin. Because this champion was way too abnormal under Lu Boyuan’s control, he wasn’t able to play him a single time during the summer season.

Lu Boyuan was long since used to it. He said, “You guys snatch up whatever you want to play, I’ll choose after seeing the team comp.”

The first few to choose all behaved normally, all the way up until Doufu suddenly chose the champion Draven, causing the entire audience to scream.

Draven was an ADC with extremely high damage in the early-mid game, but at the same time, he was also a fairly cumbersome champion. He constantly had to catch his axe, and he also didn’t have any survival spells. No matter where this champion appeared, there were only two outcomes—slaughtering until he transcended godhood, or dying until he transcended ghostdom.

“What are you doing?” Squid’s coach was startled. “Could you discuss with me before you choose your champion—”

“I can play him well, relax.” As Doufu rapidly and skillfully adjusted his runes, he couldn’t help but shoot a glance at the “TTC · Soft” on the other side.

ADCs were too weak in the current meta. His goal was precisely to choose a champion that could outplay as well as extinguish the opposing mid laner on the spot.

His goal was precisely to make Soft debut and retire simultaneously, so that he would slink back to being a streamer with his tail between his legs.

“Draven?? Is it really Draven?!” Commentator A was stunned. “Draven isn’t suitable in the current meta ah!”

“I know that Doufu’s Draven is pretty good. At first, he became well-known because of his Draven…” Commentator B paused. “But I also don’t really understand his choice here. Maybe it’s because he wants to prove himself?”

“Dumbass.” Xiao Bai was delighted, and he couldn’t resist adding another line in their voice chat. “This round’s going to be hella easy. Jian Rong, just pick Twisted Fate or something, we’ll blow him right out of the water in early-mid game…”

“Coach.” Jian Rong said in the voice chat.

Ding-*ge*, “What?”

“I want to play Zed.”

TTC’s team voice chat was silent for a few moments.

Xiao Bai almost wasn’t able to hold back blurting out another “*dumbass*.”

Zed was a mobile and high damage champion that had no CC or late game viability. His specialty was one-shotting glass cannon ADCs and, likewise, he was also either an extremely godly or extremely damning mystical creature. Players called him “Child Zed.”

Although his skills and positioning weren’t very similar to Draven’s, in the current meta, both of them were good brothers in the gutter together. Neither of them could afford to be disdainful of the other.

Lu Boyuan was the first to speak. His voice was calm. “The reason.”

Jian Rong thought for a few seconds before replying, “In total, the number of Dravens I killed using Zed last year in the Summoner’s Rift is enough to circle the earth twice.”

Everyone: “……”

They were all entertained by that comment, and even Ding-*ge* tightened his lips in laughter.

“But you can play just as well using Twisted Fate, and more stably to boot. After reaching level 6, you can fly straight to the bot lane and still kill him…” Ding-*ge* said, “It’s very risky to play Zed.”

It wasn't Jian Rong's turn to pick yet, and he silently scrolled through the champion list without saying anything.

"Really want to play him?" After a moment, Lu Boyuan spoke again.

Jian Rong let out an "en" that was neither light nor heavy.

In the arena, the commentators were still analyzing Doufu's Draven pick.

Commentator A: "Choosing this Draven really did catch me off guard. In that case, it's very obvious that Squid will have to play protecting Draven this round. In comparison, TTC's team composition is quite standard. Road chose Graves, a pretty good decision. All that's left is seeing what champion Soft will pick—I… huh??"

An unfamiliar but also familiar portrait lit up in Soft's champion list, and Commentator A almost let his "*what the fuck*" slip out.

The audience was also stupefied—

Soft preselected Zed.

Commentator B was stunned for two seconds before he instantly smiled and picked up where his colleague had left off. "Soft's Zed can also be considered the champion that made him famous, and he's quite good at playing him. However, nobody would choose Zed during a competitive match like this. After all, this champion doesn't have any CC whatsoever, and it's also extremely, extremely difficult to one-shot someone during a competitive match where players are coordinating together. In addition, this match is Soft's debut, he's definitely aiming for stability. Soft is most

likely just temporarily picking Zed to scare Doufu a bit—TTC chose Zed??????"

Only to hear a *thunk* as the champion Zed was selected and TTC's team composition was fixed.

Both commentators shared a look with each other, their eyes full of shock and disbelief.

WTF?

Zed and Draven? Were they commentating on the spring season here or a Diamond ranked game???

There was another difference between Zed and Draven: even though Zed never went on the competitive stage, he had always been a popular pick in ranked games. With Zed locked in, the stadium and livestream barrage immediately exploded!

After the champion selection was finished, the coaches shook hands and went off stage.

Ding-*ge* just stepped down when another coach in the team instantly scooted over. "*Ge*, Soft—"

Ding-*ge*: "I know that he didn't make a good choice this time, but this is his debut, so the others said to respect his decision. It wasn't appropriate for me to say anything either—also, this is a BO3 format. If we lose this round, we can make up for it in the next two. Of course, I don't necessarily think that we're going to lose…"

“No, *ge*, I wasn’t going to talk to you about that.” The other person hastily interrupted him.

Ding-*ge* said, confused, “Then what?”

The other person handed his phone over.

It was a reply that an internet user named “Love Doufufu The Most” had left in Jian Rong’s comment section. Originally, this person had been fighting with Soft’s fans, but later, because they couldn’t out-argue the fans, they decided to shade Soft himself, who they thought wouldn’t retort back—

[Love Doufufu The Most: What a joke, you only dare to say something rude because you’re relying on the fact that you have a teammate like Road, right? Who knows if TTC got blinded when they were searching for a new mid laner, or if they just temporarily found someone to round out the numbers? And also, even if TTC wins this match, it won’t have anything to do with a dumbass streamer like you? Doufu always carries match after match, earning MVP until his hands are tired from accepting it. Can a fake streamer like you do that?]

[TTC · Soft: I, your daddy, really can do it.]

A long, long time later, this Love Doufufu The Most responded again.

Ding-*ge* glanced at the time. They probably only found the confidence to run back and reply after they saw their Doufu pick his favorite champion Draven, while Soft chose a Child Zed—

[Love Doufufu The Most replied to TTC · Soft: Okokok, a freeloading mid laner is so amazing. If you can do it then I'll chop off my head so you can kick it:)]

Seeing Ding-*ge*'s expression get worse and worse, the other coach asked, "…should I delete this comment?"

The game officially began, and the cheers coming from the stage were deafening.

Ding-*ge* lifted a hand and pinched the bridge of his nose before he turned and walked swiftly towards the break room. He said through clenched teeth, "Don't delete it."

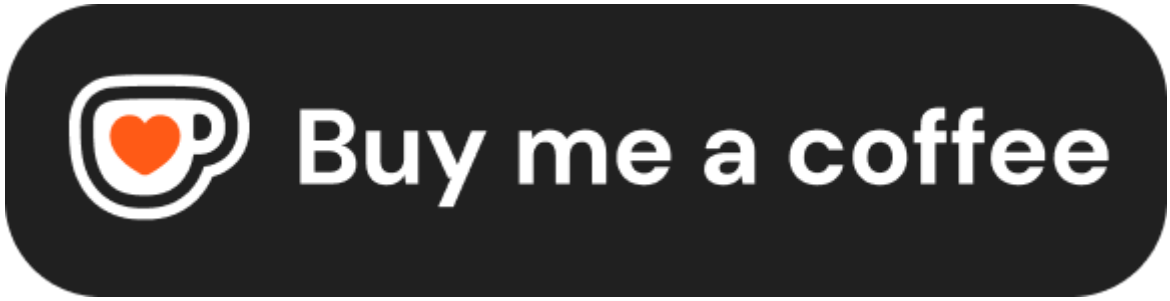
Translation Notes

1. *An extremely popular card game that you can play online in China. If interested, here's the wiki.* ^

Yan: This is indeed the scene from the summary, though some of the dialogue has slightly changed! Jian Rong is truly creating an unforgettable debut lolol.

Also, the author mentions this in a much later chapter, but since we're starting to get into the competition stuff, I'm just gonna bring it up now. Obviously ICDI isn't based off of current league meta, since things are always changing fast with updates and patches. The author says that readers should just consider this as a separate meta that the author has

come up with, so take everything with a grain of salt (like using Zed in pro play).



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ICDI Chapter 34: May I ask when you'll be mailing your head over?

After the game officially started, five champions appeared in the base.

"I feel like I can hear the audience screaming even through the headphones," Yuan Qian said.

Xiao Bai said, "Qian-*ge*, next time you pick Teemo, and I'm sure the audience will be even more excited than they are today."

Yuan Qian shook his head and laughed. "In that case, forget it. I still don't want to retire quite yet."

Naturally, Yuan Qian was exaggerating. In order to prevent the audience and commentators' voices from influencing the players' game judgments, the players all wore the best noise cancelling headphones. Jian Rong couldn't hear anything except his teammates' voices and the sound effects from the game.

After buying their items, the five of them simultaneously rushed out of the base and assumed the level 1 team fight positions.

Xiao Bai said, "Play well today, if we win let's eat frog tonight!"

To avoid falling into a food coma during a competition, professional players basically wouldn't eat anything right before the match.

Pine followed him closely. His voice was flat. "What if we lose."

“Less of that unlucky talk.” Xiao Bai tossed a skill at him threateningly. “How could we possibly lose to Squid… isn’t that right, *ge*?”

Lu Boyuan never said much when gaming. A few seconds passed before he said, “The frog tonight is my treat.”

Xiao Bai: “Thanks boss!”

“Why aren’t you saying anything ah, Xiao Rong.” Yuan Qian glanced at Zed, who was standing in the middle zoning out. “Getting nervous?”

“He’s definitely nervous.” Xiao Bai said, “After all, it all depends on this round whether he’ll be seen as a god or a madman.”

Jian Rong noted down another tally on Xiao Bai’s account before he said, “I’m thinking about something.”

Lu Boyuan asked, “Thinking about what?”

Jian Rong opened the scoreboard and confirmed it again. He was silent for a few seconds. “I was thinking… about how nobody on the other team brought Exhaust.”

Exhaust was a Summoner Spell[1] that could slow an enemy champion’s movement speed by 30% for three seconds, and also reduce their damage dealt by 40%. It was a skill that was excellent for restraining assassin champions.

But in this round, not a single person in YY chose this Summoner Spell.

When the enemy was playing an assassin champion, but nobody in the team brought Exhaust—if it wasn't an accident, then it was because they were looking down on Jian Rong.

Jian Rong felt like he had been offended.

He said expressionlessly, "Their ADC will take responsibility for this."

Lu Boyuan couldn't help but laugh. "…okay."

Squid's mid laner was playing Syndra this game, a champion who excelled at laning. Jian Rong's Zed didn't have enough damage or burst before level 6, so he could only hide behind his minions and carefully last hit the enemy minions.

"Tsk." Squid's mid laner laughed. "And here I was thinking he was all that… relax, I've locked this Soft down in mid."

Doufu glanced at the middle lane. "How come you haven't whittled down any of his health yet? Go up and use your skills ah, don't let him farm."

The mid laner said, "No rush, I can kill him soon. Nobody fight, let me have first blood."

In the stadium, the commentators were in the middle of seriously analyzing the match.

Commentator A: "Syndra poked down Zed for a wave and released her ult—unfortunately, the damage was just off by a bit. Zed is in a very bad situation, he should be recalling to base now."

Commentator B: “It’s pretty difficult for Zed to fight Syndra. If he continues to be suppressed like this, the champion’s advantage might not be able to display its full potential. As expected, Soft’s choice still isn’t good enough —”

Right as he said that, minimal-health Zed suddenly turned back midway and smashed his ult right into full-health Syndra’s face!

Everyone was startled for a moment, including Syndra. Before the commentator’s “*isn’t he just going to end up feeding if he attacks with such low health*” could even leave his mouth, he witnessed Zed calmly and proficiently unleash the maximum damage output that the champion was capable of. At the same time, Zed also beautifully and nimbly adjusted his position as minutely as possible, avoiding all of Syndra’s skills—if even a single one of those skills had hit him, Jian Rong would have died on the spot.

Jian Rong released his last auto attack, maximizing his DPS, before recasting his ult and returning to his original position. He then confidently and mockingly returned to base on the spot.

The next second, following the unique explosion sound of Zed’s ult, the Syndra behind Jian Rong responded by toppling to the ground—

“First blood!”

The entire stadium roared!!

“…beautiful!!!” Commentator A instantly found his voice again. “Heavens, that combo of Zed’s was too gorgeous! I can say this without hesitation—

Soft brilliantly utilized those three seconds of Zed's ult! He unleashed all of the damage that this champion is capable of doing!!"

"Even in that situation, he still dared to turn back? Still dared to attack??" Commentator B said, "Although Syndra didn't have her ult anymore, any one of her skills could take his life. Does – does he have that much confidence in himself??"

The player cam switched to Soft. The blue-haired teenager was controlling his champion, looking utterly unperturbed, with none of the excitement or happiness one should have after counter-killing the enemy mid laner while possessing very low health. It was as if he had long since planned out this kill.

At that moment, the amount of comments in the livestream barrage exponentially increased—

[Correct, he's just that self-confident.]

[Damn, that outplay killed me, isn't this Zed way too slippery??? He can even dodge Syndra's attacks?]

[I saw it just then. 389 HP, with 389 HP he turned around and went to kill full-health Syndra… I'm guessing that YY's mid laner is also stupefied right now]

[It's normal gameplay for him, I've even seen him double back and team fight with 23 HP before, and he fucking won too.]

[Where did you see that? Begging for a video!]

[There are replays in livestream room #4404708. If you go look, remember to follow my dumbass son, that way in the future when he streams you can be the first to insult him.]

[This little brother is so handsome ah.]

[Girlfriend fans don't bother, this dumbass is underage, Dad doesn't allow him to date early.]

…

After getting the kill, Jian Rong returned to his base to replace his items. When he went back to his lane, the sound of a kill notification came through his headphones.

Lu Boyuan had solo killed the enemy jungler, and in the other person's jungle too at that.

Not only did Lu Boyuan not leave afterwards, he also started to eat the enemy jungle's resources.

"Their mid respawned," Jian Rong warned. "He'll probably go to find you."

Lu Boyuan said, "Okay."

Then he continued to eat the enemy's red buff.

When the enemy mid laner appeared in the jungle, Lu Boyuan just finished eating the other side's red buff. With one blink, he avoided the enemy mid laner's sphere knockback CC, and shot a bullet into Syndra. Syndra… instantly lost a quarter of her health.

Jian Rong was stunned.

When laning, he very rarely paid attention to what his teammates were doing. Upon seeing Lu Boyuan's damage, he couldn't help but open the scoreboard and take a peek—

Lu Boyuan was a jungler, and his CS[2] was the highest across the board.

This meant that Lu Boyuan had consumed nearly all of the resources in Squid's jungle.

Ten seconds later, Squid's mid laner was pitifully chased by Lu Boyuan all the way from his own team's jungle to the second turret. He even ended up having to toss out a flash in order to run away.

Lu Boyuan spoke succinctly. "Mid has no flash, can kill."

After that, he continued to eat the enemy jungle's raptors.

"...too tragic." Commentator A narrowed his eyes and shook his head. "Someone who didn't know better would think that TTC had two jungles..."

"To tell the truth, I just knew that this would happen after God Lu took out Graves. This champion Graves is too powerful when invading the jungle. What's more, the person playing him is also Road..." Commentator B said, "However, it's not like Squid doesn't stand a chance. Because of his champion advantage, Doufu is fighting pretty fiercely. Even though he isn't getting burst kills, he hasn't fallen behind in terms of last hits at all."

After Jian Rong finished clearing minions at mid, he finally got down to business.

He walked towards the bottom lane and asked, “Can bot push the tower?”

Pine: “I’m at low health.”

“Their bot lane champion does too much damage, we just finished clearing a wave.” Xiao Bai immediately reported. “I think we probably can’t push…”

Jian Rong said, “I think we can.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

“Help me by tanking the turret aggro?” Jian Rong snuck into the brush to the left of the bot lane tower. “Just once is fine.”

If he had already had his heart set on pushing the tower, what the hell was the point of asking just then?

Xiao Bai gritted his teeth. “Fine, just once okay? You should go kill the support, his health is pretty low. Let me know before you attack…”

Before he could finish talking, Jian Rong had already used his ult and rushed over onto Doufu.

Xiao Bai: “……”

Zed fluidly tossed out a combo, smashing it all unerringly towards Doufu. The support, Nautilus, wanted to protect his ADC, but Xiao Bai controlled

Lulu and turned the enemy support into a sheep first. Pine immediately flashed and followed up with damage!

Doufu was ganked without warning, and he swore. Before dying, he turned to kill Jian Rong, wanting to drag the other person down too on his way out.

Draven's DPS wasn't low, and combined with the tower's damage, Jian Rong's health bar was clearly about to empty out—

"*Thunk!*" Jian Rong used his Stopwatch, rendering him invulnerable to all damage for 2.5 seconds.

Two seconds later, Xiao Bai went forward and helped him tank the tower briefly, allowing Jian Rong to successfully escape with a thread of health. He then stood where the enemy's turret couldn't hit him—and danced at Doufu's "corpse."

Simultaneously, Lu Boyuan succeeded in counterganking the enemy's jungler at the top lane. With Yuan Qian's coordination, they effortlessly got a double kill.

"Fuck!!" Doufu let out a curse. "He must be crazy! Using a Stopwatch while playing Zed!!!"

The audience and the commentators all thought that this would be the end of the battle between Soft and Doufu.

They never expected it to be just the beginning.

Even low ranked players knew that Zed couldn't be allowed to farm too comfortably in the early game, or else there would be nothing but death in the mid game when they ran into him.

Jian Rong had two kills. Not long after, he bought his first core item.

And thus began Draven's nightmare.

Under the tower, in the jungle, even on his way over to the bot lane, Zed was everywhere. He only needed three seconds to kill Draven, and Draven didn't have a single chance to counter-kill.

It was one thing if it was just being killed, but every time, Jian Rong would also dance and flash his team icon on top of Doufu's corpse.

Commentator A: "Ah, this…"

Commentator B laughed dryly. "Of course, this is merely normal interaction between friends!"

After being solo killed and taunted twice in a row, Doufu was so angry that he was almost spouting smoke. His mouse creaked with how hard he was gripping it.

"Don't get mad, don't get mad!" Knowing Doufu's temper was bad, the support instantly said, "I won't go scout, I'll just follow you."

The jungler quickly said, "I'm also nearby. There's no way he'll still dare to come over…"

Zed still came over.

Along with his jungler.

Lu Boyuan was playing Graves, and with one gun, he could tear down several large chunks of the tanky Nautilus' health bar.

In the enemy jungle, they chased the three enemies with the imposing manner of an army a thousand strong. Graves only put away his gun after the three people on the other team were all at low health, and Jian Rong took all three heads.

"Triple kill—"

"Badass, Jian Rong!!" Xiao Bai blurted out his praise. "It turns out you haven't been practicing for nothing all this time after all. You've grown taller! And you've become stronger!!"

Jian Rong: "."

"Doufu is at 0/6 now, that feels way too good hahahaha!" Xiao Bai said, "Why aren't you saying anything?"

Jian Rong said coolly, "I don't want to cross the line."

Xiao Bai: "No way, is it not enough that you kill him six times already? You still want to go beat him up?"

Jian Rong said, "I want to beat up my teammate."

Xiao Bai shut up.

The first round ended in twenty-seven minutes with TTC easily taking the win.

Doufu's final score was 1/8/3, and when he walked off stage, his face was as dark as the bottom of a pot.

The two commentators glanced at the excessive gap between the two teams' gold, before they glanced at the ridiculous kill count comparison of 24:4.

"Am I commentating on the spring season?" Commentator A was speechless for a few seconds and asked, "I feel like I just witnessed an Ionia[3] Diamond ranked game…"

"I recommend that Squid bans Road's Graves for the next round. His invading is… too powerful." Commentator B restrained himself and swallowed his other "*might as well ban Zed too*" recommendation back into his stomach.

Jian Rong followed his teammates off stage to rest. The entire way there, cameras were following him.

After returning to the break room, he took back his phone from a staff member. Right after he finished reading Love Doufufu The Most's reply, Ding-*ge* confiscated his phone again.

"You can have it back after you're done with the match. I'll hold it for safekeeping for now." Ding-*ge* slipped the phone into his pocket and said, "You guys got it all out of your system now after this round, right? Can we use a team comp that's actually viable for the next game?"

The intermission break was only ten minutes long. Ding-*ge* gave a few simple instructions before the staff came in and told them to get ready to go on stage again.

Jian Rong took a sip of water. After he stood up, he saw that Ding-*ge* was hunched over talking about something with Lu Boyuan—

Ding-*ge*'s voice came in intermittent spurts, and it was a little indistinct. "Your hand… still okay?"

Professional players were too sensitive towards the word "hand." Jian Rong abruptly came to a stop and turned his head to listen closely, his eyebrows unconsciously furrowing.

This eavesdropping was a bit too obvious. Originally, Lu Boyuan was going to respond, but he discovered Jian Rong's gaze the moment he looked up.

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. Half a second later, he withdrew his hand from his pocket and lazily uncurled his fingers in front of Ding-*ge* and Jian Rong.

"I said it was fine, don't worry so much."

Two minutes later, the players took the stage again.

The director first gave Lu Boyuan a long camera shot, before moving to Jian Rong and finally Doufu.

Doufu's face was covered with water, and it was evident that he had just washed his face. His expression was also much worse than it had been

before they went off stage, so he had probably been lectured backstage.

The game entered the pick/ban phase. Commentator A joked, “This round won’t be another Diamond match, right.”

With a dark look on his face, Doufu picked a conformist champion that was extremely good at running away: Ezreal.

Actually, Ezreal was an ADC suited for the current meta, but to choose him now…

[Dumbass, admitting your cowardice? Keep picking your Draven ah?]

[Why such a long face? If I were his teammate, I’d resent him for bringing bad luck.]

[Why aren’t the Doufu fans yapping away anymore? Come out and circle around some more again.]

[Sure enough, the fans reflect their idols, TTC’s fans have no inner qualities to speak of. Have you never won a match before? And also, this is a BO3 game. A passerby would’ve thought that TTC had already won.]

It was Jian Rong’s turn to pick a champion. During his preselection, Jian Rong lit up a Draven for everyone.

The two commentators: “…”

The audience: “…”

The last second before the pick phase ended, Jian Rong leisurely switched to LeBlanc and locked her in.

Commentator A forced a laugh. “Soft really knows how to joke around with us…”

Commentator B gave a fake smile and nodded while thinking, *Like hell that was a joke*. That bluenette’s choice was no different from constructing a cannon here and incessantly launching mockery into Doufu’s face.

This round, Squid chose a very standard, meta team composition, so everyone thought that they would probably stand a fighting chance.

But they were all wrong.

Ever since TTC had changed mid laners, people had always viewed the exchange pessimistically, causing everyone to forget something—before this, TTC and Squid had never even been on the same playing field before.

Twenty minutes in, Lu Boyuan ganked Squid’s bot lane, Jian Rong solo killed the enemy mid laner for the second time, and Yuan Qian destroyed one of the enemy’s towers in the top lane.

Twenty-three minutes in, TTC grouped together. Pine got three kills, and they wiped out Squid before they took Baron.

Twenty-six minutes in, TTC pressed straight towards the enemy base. The moment before they demolished the other team’s Nexus, Jian Rong charged into the enemy fountain and instakilled Doufu before using a Zhonya’s Hourglass in the fountain—

The game ended. TTC crushingly won the competitive match with a final score of 2:0.

Jian Rong removed his headphones and went over with his teammates to shake hands amidst the stadium's cheers.

Doufu's face was ashen, and his mouth was stretched tight. He glared viciously at Jian Rong.

Doufu was thinking, right now they were all wearing recording mics, so if this bluenette troll dared to insult him again, he would definitely report him to the LPL immediately and let the LPL suspend him.

Unexpectedly, Jian Rong walked over to him, smiled, and shook his hand, before he languidly said in a voice that everyone around them could hear, "—you play Draven so well."

The sound of some people trying their hardest to muffle their laughter floated over from nearby.

Doufu: "……"

Dammit!!!!

After they finished shaking hands and exchanging bows, TTC's members packed up their peripherals and went off stage.

"Hahahaha Doufu's 'ate shit' expression was way too freaking funny!" Xiao Bai said, "Speaking of which, has he become weaker recently? Before I thought that it was still a little interesting when facing off against him in the

lane, but in the second round just now, I thought that I was playing a Gold ranked game…"

Yuan Qian laughed. "He was dumbfounded by Xiao Rong's playing. It was like he was sleepwalking during the second game."

Xiao Bai thought of something and turned his head. "*Ge*, the frog tonight __"

Lu Boyuan had already put on his hat, looking ready to depart at any time. "Already ordered."

Jian Rong had just put on his coat when a staff member suddenly pushed open the break room door.

"We're about to conduct the post-match MVP interview." The staff member swept a look around the break room before he smiled and asked, "Soft, is now a good time for you?"

Usually when water friends watched the competition livestream, they would just exit out of the video once the match finished. Only a few players' fans would stay behind to watch the MVP interview.

But today, for the spring season opening match's MVP interview segment, the number of viewers in the stream increased instead of decreasing.

The camera switched to the scene of the interview, and a teenager with dyed blue hair appeared in everyone's view.

The one in charge of this interview was Tang Qin. She smiled and said, “Okay. Right now, I’m interviewing the MVP from today’s match—TTC’s Soft. First of all, congratulations to TTC for their win today. Soft, this is your first time playing in a competition. Did you feel nervous, or were there any parts that you weren’t used to?”

Jian Rong blinked and said, “No.”

[You won’t even smile during an interview stinky son??]

[?? Are you very cool? Stop posturing!]

Tang Qin also paused, but she maintained her smile. “Today TTC competed against the LPL’s veteran team Squid. Did you guys make any special preparations before the match?”

“No.” Jian Rong looked up at the camera, his tone of voice lazy. “We were just playing casually, we didn’t expect to win so easily.”

“…” Tang Qin restrained a laugh. “In that case, we also saw you take out Zed in the first round and create an excellent advantage. If you don’t mind me asking, do you also really like ganking the bottom lane normally when you play ranked with Zed?”

Jian Rong: “It depends. The main thing was that Draven looked too much like 300 pieces of gold[4], and I got too into the game and couldn’t hold back, so I kept running to the bot lane, my fault… I wasn’t purposefully targeting Doufu, I hope he’s doing alright.”

Tang Qin nodded. “As a new professional player, do you have any expectations for or are you looking forward to any of the upcoming matches?”

Jian Rong thought about it. “I hope that I can come across an opponent that’s a little stronger.”

[I’m really going to freaking lose it hahahahahahaha]

[He’s repeating what Doufu said in his stream hahahaha, Jian Rong are you a grudge-bearing spirit???]

[‘I hope he’s doing alright’ hahahahaha]

[In the future I absolutely cannot miss any of TTC’s MVP interviews.]

[Damn Soft wake up, this is the fucking post-game interview, not the trash talking segment!!]

Tang Qin could no longer control her smiling expression, so she could only control her tone of voice. “Okay, thank you very much, Soft, for accepting our interview. Then, as the interview wraps up, do you have anything that you want to say to the water friends or fans watching the stream?”

Tang Qin thought that he would answer “no” again.

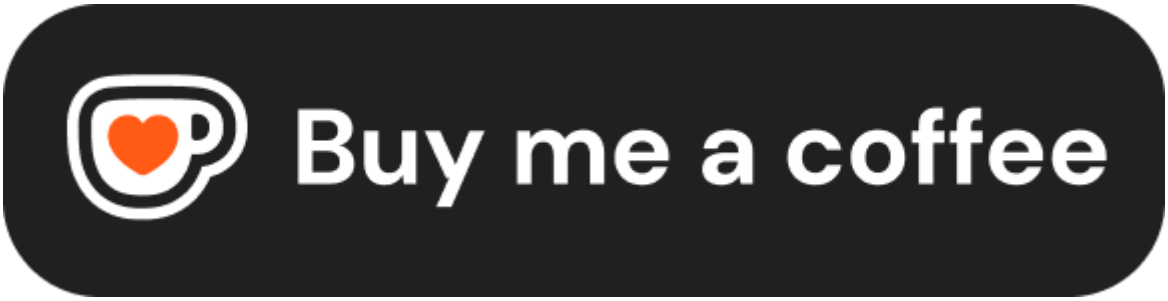
But she saw the teenager suddenly flash a smile. “I do have something that I want to say.”

Jian Rong looked into the camera and asked, extremely politely, “That online friend with the Weibo user ID ‘Loves Doufufu The Most,’ I got the

MVP position, and I also killed Doufufu many times… my team's address is on the official website, may I ask when you'll be mailing your head over?"

Translation Notes

1. *Each player can pick 2 summoner spells before the game begins. Examples include flash, ignite, exhaust, heal, barrier, etc* ^
2. *Creep score, the amount of minions/neutral monsters a champion has killed* ^
3. *Like Zaun, Ionia is another Chinese server. This one is known for being a bloodbath and having a lot of smurfs* ^
4. *You get 300 gold when you kill an enemy champion* ^



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ICDI Chapter 35: 174.1

Thank you Aryab for the Ko-fi!

Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian's startlingly loud laughter came from TTC's break room.

Xiao Bai was laughing so hard that he almost toppled over. He braced himself against the sofa and gestured at Pine, who was sitting next to the door. "P-baby, hurry up and lock the door."

Pine said, "For what?"

Xiao Bai reached a hand out to brush away his tears from laughing. "I'm afraid that Doufufu will momentarily take it too hard and storm our break room to do something irredeemable."

Ding-*ge* had a hand propped up against the wall as he stared at the television broadcast, thinking that this was definitely because he had been getting by too comfortably during these past few years.

As a result, the heavens sent a person like this down to torment him.

He turned to ask the team's assistant manager next to him, "Do you still remember how much the termination fee was in that contract we signed with Soft?"

The assistant manager said, "I don't remember. What's wrong?"

Ding-*ge*: “Let’s terminate the contract with him. I’ll pay the fee and treat it as if I’m buying myself happiness for the latter half of my life.”

“…”

Even though he said that, he still had to take responsibility for the mess that his own team’s player created.

A few seconds later, Ding-*ge* clenched his teeth and said, “In a bit, I’ll go check out what the LPL allows players to say. Although Jian Rong didn’t say many decent things at all, at least he didn’t use any profanity, so it shouldn’t be too severe. There’s also Weibo… where are you going?”

Lu Boyuan opened the break room door. “Bathroom.”

Currently, all the staff members were busy, so the restroom was completely empty.

Lu Boyuan had just turned on the sink faucet when he heard a voice come from behind him—

“You gave those kills away quite skillfully.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t bother looking back. He cast his eyes downward and washed his hands. “How come you still haven’t left yet?”

“We didn’t have any matches today, so we were originally going to leave… but then your team’s mid laner locked in Zed the moment he went up, and our mid laner suggested leaving after watching the game here. That’s why we stayed until now.” XIU paused before laughing. “That’s right, I just heard

that you were the one who recruited Soft? When did you start also managing who the team recruited?"

Lu Boyuan repeated for the nth time, "Not managing, just a recommendation. I don't have the final say in who the team recruits."

On the surface, that was true, but Lu Boyuan had been in TTC for many years now and had also seized countless excellent achievements for the team. The team would attach high importance to even one of his casually spoken comments.

"But your team's new mid laner really is pretty good. His gameplay and awareness both aren't bad. The only thing is that his personality is too ostentatious. It's one thing if he uses Zed in a competition, but he even dares to make trouble during the post-game interview." XIU walked over to him and ran the water in the next sink, quickly washing his hands before he fished out cigarettes from his pocket. "Want a stick?"

"Ding-*ge* will fine me ten thousand yuan for one cigarette." Lu Boyuan shot a look at the cigarettes in XIU's hand before swiftly averting his gaze again. "If you help me pay that, I'll smoke a few with you."

"Forget it then…" XIU lit a cigarette for himself before he suddenly recalled something and chuckled. "On my way over, I saw that Ding-*ge* was in the middle of lecturing your mid laner. In my opinion, he should be lecturing you. If you hadn't let Soft take those three kills, it's not certain who the MVP would've been."

Speaking of that, XIU clicked his tongue. “When we queued together before, how come I never saw you give me any kills? Even if you didn’t give them to me, that’s fine, but you also stole them from me? Discriminatory behavior??”

Lu Boyuan hummed before he said carelessly, “Once you go and dye your hair blue, I’ll also give you some kills when we queue together.”

XIU: “…so you also had this kind of damn hobby, you should’ve said so sooner ah.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t feel like answering him. He dried his hands and threw away the paper towel. “Leaving now, enjoy your smoke.”

Right after Lu Boyuan left the bathroom, he saw the last match’s MVP standing against the wall, playing on his phone. Hearing noise, the other person raised his head, and their eyes met for a few seconds.

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow and asked, “Ding-*ge* made you stand by the bathroom entrance as punishment?”

“…no.” Jian Rong snapped out of it and slipped his phone into his pocket. “The bus is waiting at the back entrance. You didn’t answer your phone when they called, so Ding-*ge* told me to go look for you in the bathroom.”

Lu Boyuan was used to putting his phone on silent during competitions, so it was very normal for him not to notice a call.

He nodded. “Then how come you didn’t come inside to look for me?”

Originally, Jian Rong was going to go inside.

But the moment he saw the bathroom door, he instantly remembered what happened that night he drank himself into a dead pig…

“I was afraid,” Jian Rong made up a random excuse, “of disturbing you while you went to the bathroom.”

Lu Boyuan: “.”

Jian Rong: “…”

On their way back to the base, Jian Rong covered his entire head with his team jacket, reclining back very serenely.

Xiao Bai was given a fright when he looked back. “What are you doing?”

Jian Rong said moodily, “Sleeping.”

Xiao Bai: “Isn’t this sleeping posture of yours a little too ominous?”

Jian Rong: “Oh, then next time I’ll stick a ‘good fortune’ talisman on my forehead before sleeping?”

“…”

“Leave a gap.” Lu Boyuan glanced at the back seat via the car window. “The heating is on in the bus, it’ll be stuffy.”

Xiao Bai was about to advise his *ge* not to bother with rebellious teenagers when, in the next second, the jacket beside him shifted a little.

Jian Rong obediently pulled down his jacket, revealing half of his face.

By the time they returned to the base, the dinner that Lu Boyuan ordered had already arrived. The five of them sat around the coffee table in the first floor living room and ate while watching tonight's second match.

Ding-*ge* came back from outside while still on a call. Seeing his stance, Jian Rong thought that he was about to be scolded again.

"You guys all know what your height and weight are, right?" Ding-*ge* covered his phone and asked.

Yuan Qian questioned, his mouth covered with grease, "Yeah, what's up?"

"They need the measurements for making merch, I'm not clear on the details either. Later when you're done eating, each of you report your height and weight to me. The numbers should be genuine and exact." Ding-*ge* looked at Jian Rong. "You too, from now on part of the merch will be yours."

Jian Rong hesitated for a few seconds before he finally let out a dry "oh."

"I refuse!" Xiao Bai raised a hand in protest. "A man's weight is a secret! And it's been a long time since I've measured my own height."

Ding-*ge* nodded. "Then I'll tell them to fill it in however they want. When the time comes, if the weight is four to six kilograms over, you better not pick a fight over it."

"…" Xiao Bai admitted defeat. "But I really don't remember anymore."

Ding-*ge* said, “There’s a scale on the third floor. As for height…”

“I have a measuring tape in my room.” Lu Boyuan interrupted evenly.

“Great, those of you who need to measure your height can go borrow the tape measure.” Ding-*ge* glanced at his watch. “Send the numbers to my WeChat before you sleep.”

After eating and drinking his fill, Jian Rong went back to his room and took a shower. When he was blow-drying his hair, he purposefully dried it so that his hair stuck up quite high, so that it would be more convenient when measuring his height later.

He had drunk so many cups of milk. No matter what, he should’ve grown at least a tiny bit taller.

At ten, Jian Rong went to knock on Lu Boyuan’s door.

When nobody answered after two knocks, Jian Rong thought that the other person had gone to sleep, so he lightened his footsteps and turned to return to his own room.

Click.

A gust of warm air came out from inside the room. Lu Boyuan was rubbing his hair with a towel, and when he saw Jian Rong’s sluggish movements, he called out to him, amused, “Jian Rong.”

Jian Rong froze, and he turned his head. “…I wanted to borrow the measuring tape.”

Lu Boyuan opened his door wider. “Come in.”

Jian Rong originally wanted to say that he could just wait at the door, but Lu Boyuan had already left the door wide open and gone back inside. Jian Rong dithered for a little before he also followed him in.

The entire room was filled with a shower gel’s faint scent. Jian Rong couldn’t pinpoint what fragrance it was, but he felt like it smelled very nice.

Evidently Lu Boyuan had also just finished showering. His hair was damp, and his clothing was a little disheveled; he was wearing knee-length shorts, and he was currently bent over, rummaging through his drawers.

Jian Rong stared at his back for a while before he pressed his lips together and looked elsewhere.

Lu Boyuan’s room couldn’t be considered neat, but it wasn’t messy either. There was a LoL poster stuck on the wall and a basketball in the corner. He had tossed his team jacket very casually over a chair, and his wired earbuds hung chaotically over the edge of the pen holder on the desk.

Jian Rong rapidly retracted his gaze only when Lu Boyuan turned around holding the measuring tape.

He reached out, wanting to take it.

“Step back a bit.” Lu Boyuan said.

Jian Rong was startled and subconsciously took two steps back.

Lu Boyuan strode over to him. Seeing that they were about to collide, Jian Rong retreated a little more, and his back bumped against the wall, neither lightly nor heavily.

Lu Boyuan tossed the towel that he was using to dry his hair into the laundry basket. “Stand up straight.”

Jian Rong instantly understood what was going on, and he said, “I can do it myself—”

“It’s not easy to do alone.” Lu Boyuan crouched down and pressed one end of the measuring tape onto the ground. “Put your feet together, or else the measurement will be shorter.”

Hearing that, Jian Rong immediately brought his legs together, plastering himself against the wall and standing stick straight.

The youth’s calves were slim and also very pale. Lu Boyuan swept a glance over before he stood up while extending the measuring tape.

Jian Rong was looking downwards, and he just happened to be able to see Lu Boyuan’s dampened jaw and the ends of his hair. A section of his shirt collar had also been dyed dark, and it stuck to the man’s collarbones.

“You…” Lu Boyuan straightened up and lifted his other hand, pressing down on Jian Rong’s hair. “How did you blow-dry your hair?”

Jian Rong could smell the fragrance coming from Lu Boyuan’s body. He said, “No particular way.”

Lu Boyuan's palm was pressing down on his head, and Jian Rong swallowed a few times repeatedly before he said, "How about I…"

The force coming from the palm grew a little heavier. "Don't move."

A few seconds later, Lu Boyuan reported a number. "174."

"……174.1." Jian Rong corrected with a wooden expression, "At my checkup in October, it was 174.1."

"Fine, 174.1." Lu Boyuan paused briefly before he lowered his eyes and asked, "It seems like you wrote 175 on your resume?"

Jian Rong gritted his teeth. "It's 175 if you round up to the nearest integer."

Lu Boyuan laughed.

Jian Rong: "Don't laugh."

Lu Boyuan gave an "en." "I didn't laugh."

Jian Rong discovered that when Lu Boyuan laughed, his Adam's apple would bob once very slightly.

Now that his resume's lie about his height had been exposed, Jian Rong basically fled in defeat as he was leaving. On his way out, he also ran into Xiao Bai.

"You're done measuring?" Xiao Bai asked. "How tall?"

Jian Rong: "None of your damn business."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Jian Rong went back to his room and laid on his bed for half an hour without falling asleep.

As a result, he took out his phone and searched on Baidu—

[Can you really grow taller by drinking milk?]

[Will you still grow at 17?]

[What can you eat to grow taller?]

[How tall is Lu Boyuan?]

…

When Jian Rong saw the screen that popped up, he was startled at first before he went to look at the profile on Baidu Baike—186 cm[1].

Jian Rong was in the middle of holding his phone and feeling sour when he suddenly received a notification.

[Shiliu: Bro, you've really outdone yourself today. My entire Weibo homepage is praising you for being badass hahaha]

Jian Rong was feeling gloomy, but when he saw that text, the tiny bit of delight from beating up Doufufu today came surging back again.

[R-ong: Send me a screenshot]

[Shiliu: Even this needs to be screenshotted? Just open Weibo or Tieba, it's all over both.]

Jian Rong didn't need to log into Weibo to know how chaotic his comment section was right now. As a result, he thought a bit before he opened Tieba, which he hadn't used for a long time.

He won the competition so beautifully today, so there was no way that group of dumbasses on Tieba could find anything to slander him over.

Jian Rong propped one hand behind his neck as he laid there and lazily clicked on "SoftBar." He had already prepared himself to see a screen full of compliments when—

[Analyzing how many cm the dumbass' insoles were today. [energetic] 1,211 replies]

?

Jian Rong stared blankly at the red line of text that greeted him. It took him a few seconds to recover and click on it.

[1L: Submitting two reference photos. One is the picture of God Lu carrying him, the other is a picture of him standing beside God Lu today]

[22L: Does this even need to be analyzed? At the very least it's 4.5cm]

[124L: Ah, no wonder I thought that something looked off when he stood next to his teammates and bowed today…]

[333L: What in the world was going on inside that dumbass' little melon head? Is it fun to trick himself? Or did he really think he could hide it from his dad?]

[498L: It's good that he used them, or else on stage he wouldn't even be as tall as that female host, losing face for all the friends in this bar.]

[607L: I've calculated it before, his real height is 174 at the most, I swear.]

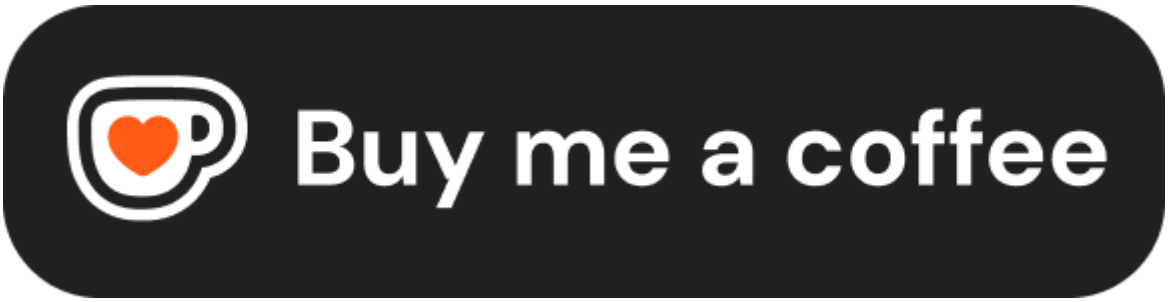
Jian Rong: "..."

Jian Rong left the post and expressionlessly unfollowed that Tieba forum.

Translation Notes

1. *About 6'1. If you don't remember from before Jian Rong's like 5'8.5* ^

Wei: It's okay Rong Rong... height isn't everything LOL you're a short king



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ICDI Chapter 36: Team friendship.

Thank you to Ringo for the Ko-fi!

TTC's next match was one week later. Winning one regular season match wasn't some big occasion worth celebrating, so the next day Ding-*ge* came to the base and woke everyone up to go downstairs and review yesterday's game.

This was Jian Rong's first time attending a real match review meeting. Even though they also held reviews for practice matches, it was always a little informal because those weren't actual competitions.

"Seventeen minutes in, right here." Ding-*ge* paused the game footage and pointed at the Zed on the screen, asking Jian Rong, "This is only seventeen freaking minutes in! You're almost all the way at their bot lane second turret, how did that happen? You want to push their base without even pushing the first tower??"

Before Jian Rong could say anything, he was cut off by Ding-*ge* again. "I know that you wanted to come here and camp their bot lane, but could you guarantee they had no sight of you? Or was it that you simply didn't care whether you could escape or not, you only wanted to kill their ADC? Did you know that you had gold on you at that time?"

Xiao Bai cleared his throat and peeked at Jian Rong, afraid that he would explode with an "*are you teaching me how to play this game?*".

But Jian Rong didn't.

Both of his hands rested on top of the table, and he quietly waited for the lecturing to finish before he said, "My fault."

So well-behaved that even Ding-*ge* was momentarily startled.

"…it's the same problem that you have in practice matches, you're too independent. You can play like that against Squid, but what about against Fighting Tiger? Or PUD? Or at Worlds in the future? You've also watched clips from the last season before, so you know how tacit the coordination is for strong teams. The mid-late game almost always uses a team fight strategy. It's very easy for them to find a gap with your one-man combat habit. Continue to improve, I will start paying attention to this habit of yours beginning from the next practice match."

Ding-*ge* pressed play again. The next scene was of Jian Rong successfully ganking Squid's bot lane duo from the brush and instakilling Doufu in a few seconds, not giving any face to the enemy support at all.

He should scold for the parts that needed to be scolded, but he couldn't forget to give praise where it was due either. Ding-*ge* nodded. "But your gameplay is top-notch. Keep maintaining this kind of state."

When reviewing, Ding-*ge*'s habit was to meticulously comb through the recording section by section, pointing out anyone who made a mistake. Half an hour later, everyone else besides Lu Boyuan had been scolded a few times.

Jian Rong was the MVP, but he was also the one who was lectured the most.

After the first game ended, Ding-*ge* took a big gulp of his water to moisten his throat. He looked at Lu Boyuan and said, “This match review meeting… makes me feel like I’ve returned to that one meeting five years ago.”

At that, Lu Boyuan chuckled but didn’t say anything.

Jian Rong asked, “What happened five years ago?”

“Five years ago…” Ding-*ge* paused and suddenly asked, “Aren’t you one of his long-time fans?”

Lu Boyuan tilted his head and looked over, only to see Jian Rong open his mouth and give a vague, low “ah” after a long pause.

“I remember that hat of yours now,” Ding-*ge* said. “It’s from the first year Xiao Lu joined the team, a piece of merch that the team was selling at the venue during the LDL finals, right?”

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow and recalled it.

When they were in the LDL, they didn’t really have a lot of fans yet; in fact, hardly anyone knew about them, so during that LDL season, they only made merch for the finals. He did have a vague impression of the merch being hats.

Jian Rong tugged at his hair and moved his lips, about to say something.

“So young.” Lu Boyuan’s gaze landed on the top of his head. “You started playing the game when you were twelve or thirteen?”

Jian Rong let out an “en.” “My dad played. I learned after watching him play a lot.”

“If you’ve been watching him compete since the LDL, do you not know how he played at the beginning?” Ding-*ge* put down his cup. “He was also a loner. At that time, the esports industry wasn’t as developed, and there weren’t any coaches or data analysts like there are now… it was all dependent on individual strength. Either he ganked the others, or they teamed up to countergank him. Later, when he entered the LPL, he was taught how to behave properly after he lost consecutively through the entire regular season and almost couldn’t enter the playoffs. During that time, we had daily review meetings in the team, and I ate throat lozenges like they were meals…”

Jian Rong raised his chin, listening even more closely than he had just then during the match review.

“Enough.” Lu Boyuan interrupted him. “If we’re going to review, then do it properly. There’s no need to suddenly reminisce about the past.”

“I remember that the merch was selling for pretty cheap back then? At the manufacturing cost, so we could pull in fans.” Xiao Bai knocked Jian Rong’s elbow. “Did you buy my merch?”

Jian Rong contemplated for a few seconds and frowned. “You were also in the team at that time?”

It was a genuine question, but it was even more hurtful than mockery.

Xiao Bai smiled and shut up.

After the review meeting ended, Ding-*ge* closed the recording and said to Jian Rong, "Last thing. Regarding you telling someone to mail you their head in the post-match interview… I've discussed it with the LPL."

Jian Rong nodded. "Do I send the penalty money to the same bank account as before?"

"…there's no need for you to be so proficient about it." Ding-*ge* was speechless. "There's no penalty fee this time. Trash talking is allowed in the first place, they've even set up a pre-match trash talking segment on their side anyway. But in the end, since what you said wasn't anything good, you still have to show the appropriate attitude. After the discussion, we arrived at two punishments. One, you have to go and apologize to that fan on Weibo; two, you have to go and apologize to Doufu…"

"Why apologize to him?" Lu Boyuan said coolly. "Did Jian Rong curse him out?"

Nobody expected him to speak, and they were all startled.

"It's fine, it's just an apology." Jian Rong said indifferently, "Two words, that's all. It's not like I'm sincere."

Lu Boyuan didn't look at him. He only asked Ding-*ge*, "Who did you discuss this with in the LPL?"

"…no, it's not really an apology either, let me finish." Ding-*ge* said, "They just want him to go and interact with Doufu once. Squid will also let Doufu know about this. The most important thing is to put on a show for the sake of the audience and to reflect the friendship between the big teams."

Lu Boyuan's brows were still furrowed, but in the end he didn't speak again.

Jian Rong hesitated for a moment. "Interact… that doesn't mean hugging or shaking hands or something, right?"

"It's not that excessive." Ding-*ge* glanced at his little notebook. "All you have to do is go to his livestream room and send some gifts before exchanging some dialogue with him. He's streaming at seven tonight. Since you got MVP at the last match, you can submit a reimbursement form for the gift money this time."

As a result, at seven that night, Jian Rong posted on Weibo.

[TTC · Soft: On the evening of January 12th, during the spring season's regular post-match interview, I said something that was very inappropriate. Thus, I apologize to @Love Doufufu The Most. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have exposed your Weibo ID on the stream, nor do I really want your honorable head. My deepest apologies.]

After posting that, Jian Rong logged into his main livestream account, which he hadn't accessed in a long time, and loaded 20,000 yuan[1] onto it.

When he entered Doufu's stream, Doufu was in the middle of a game, a scowl on his face.

[Did you all see Soft's Weibo? I'm shook 0.0]

[Oh dear~~ Does TTC not have any managers? How could they allow a member to post such a crude apology statement ah…]

[Doufufu is so handsome today too!]

This was Jian Rong's first time seeing a barrage with this kind of style. Inside, he felt a little put off by it, but he was also a tiny bit envious.

If those dumbasses from his livestream room were half as gentle as these female fans, their father and son relationship wouldn't be as bad as it was today.

Jian Rong was just about to send the gifts when he saw Doufu open a certain video that a friend sent over.

It was a clip from their match, and there was also a line of text above the video: [Spring Season Match #1, Mic Check].

Before Jian Rong could realize what this video was about, he heard his own voice—

"Nobody on the other team brought Exhaust, their ADC will take responsibility for this.

"This Draven glanced at me, he's dead.

"Who gave him the #1 Draven title? The little third year middle schooler that lives downstairs from me plays better than he does, I recommend that Squid hire him immediately."

Then it was Xiao Bai's voice. "Why did you go gank Draven again… he doesn't even dare to come out of the base anymore because you killed him so many times."

"Once he chose Draven right in front of me, our relationship became one of enemies that cannot coexist at the same time." Jian Rong declared, "On this map, me and him, there can only be one. If I allow him to survive for over three minutes, this game will be considered my loss."

...it was actually the competition audio from that match.

Seeing Doufu's face grow more and more green, Jian Rong thought, *You're the one who opened the video, you can't blame it on me*.

[……why is this person like this...]

[Is speaking like this also allowed? Can I report it to the LPL?]

[Wtf wtf wtf, how come I see Soft among the livestream's spectators!!!!]

[I heard that my son is in this little crappy livestream room??]

[Report nmb[2], controlling the sky, controlling the earth, you're also gonna control what players said during a competition?]

[I'm here I'm here, has the little dumbass started flaming yet? I haven't missed it have I?]

There were many fans who had followed Jian Rong's main livestream account, and they would all get notified if he started a stream or if he entered someone else's livestream room. In a few short minutes, many of his fans appeared in the livestream room.

[A bunch of low quality people came, room mod kick these trolls~~]

[If something's wrong with your brain, then go get it treated. Has Dad insulted you or your Master Doufu? Paranoid about being insulted?]

They still had a practice match in a bit, so Jian Rong didn't want to continue wasting time. He moved his mouse and sent a Sea of Stars gift.

This development was a bit unexpected, and all the water friends in the stream were startled. They then all started spamming question marks.

According to the script that Ding-*ge* had given him, first Jian Rong would send his gifts, and then Doufu would thank him for it. They would exchange a few more lines and that would be the end of it.

But Doufu only gave a sneer and started to chat with the barrage.

"Dinner? I ate it already. Ate some noodles… not tired, I just don't have an appetite. Room mod, do your job, kick all the people insulting others or my fans."

Jian Rong coldly watched him act pretentious.

A Sea of Stars was StarTV's most expensive gift, and the special effects that covered the entire screen were extremely grandiose. It was impossible for Doufu not to have seen it.

This dumbass was purposefully pretending to be blind.

[Jian Rong what the hell are you doing??? Dad worries every day that you don't have enough money to spend, but then you come and send gifts to this dumbass?]

[You can't see such huge special effects? A blind person is playing competitively?]

[There's something wrong with all of you, of course Doufu saw it~ he just doesn't want to bother with a troll, that's all.]

[Coming to admit defeat and apologize? Hahahaha]

[I just want to ask, do you fans feel embarrassed or not? Your master came to make amends and apologize, but Doufu doesn't even appreciate it~!]

These comments made Doufu feel very cheerful.

The corners of his mouth curved up. He had just decided to leave Soft hanging for a while and let him lose all his face before putting on a pretence of reluctantly acknowledging him, when a platform notification suddenly popped up in the lower right corner of his screen—

[The streamer 'TTC · Road' that you are following is online.]

[The streamer 'TTC · Road' that you are following has entered your livestream room.]

Before Doufu could recollect his thoughts, a sentence jumped out in the barrage.

[TTC · Road: ?]

Doufu had attacked many professional players before with his teammates in private, except for Road.

It wasn't that he didn't dare to, but rather this person basically didn't have any faults.

Road had been in the industry for five years and had countless anti-fans. But if one surveyed the entire LPL, no professional player would dare to call Road trash. His appearance and build were even more so the industry's ceiling.

All of the LPL's professional players followed Road's livestream room; his status in the esports circle was evident from this alone.

For Road to come to his livestream room now, no matter what it wasn't to come and see him stream.

Even though Doufu had a trashy mouth, he also knew which people he couldn't afford to offend. He instantly sat up straight and said, "How come God Lu is here… oh, thank you, Soft, for the Sea of Stars. Thanks bro, I didn't see it earlier."

Jian Rong didn't pay him any attention.

He stared blankly at Lu Boyuan's ID for a few seconds before he couldn't help but twist his head back.

Lu Boyuan was standing right behind him. One of his hands was inserted in his pocket, and the sound of the stream came from his phone. He lowered his eyes and asked, "Are you done gifting?"

"…no." Jian Rong looked upwards at him. "Ding-*ge* told me to send two Sea of Stars."

“Mn.” Disliking the noise, Lu Boyuan put his phone on mute. “Once you’re done, come to the practice room. Fighting Tiger is waiting.”

Seeing no response come from Soft, Doufu spoke again. “Where’s Soft? He left?”

[TTC · Soft sent you a Sea of Stars.]

Doufu smirked, satisfied. “Thanks bro, don’t waste your money…”

[TTC · Soft: Don’t mention it bro. I killed you so many times, so I feel quite apologetic.]

Doufu: “?”

[TTC · Soft: You can just consider these gifts as compensation for that.]

Doufu: “……”

[TTC · Soft: Is two enough? Originally I wanted to send you eight Sea of Stars, since I did kill you eight times, but I’m out of money. You don’t mind, right?]

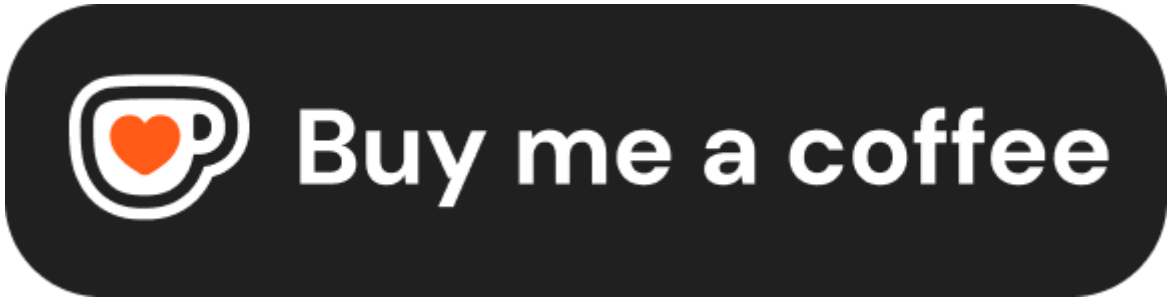
Doufu’s face was ashen, and he thought, *To hell with this team friendship*.

Translation Notes

1. *About $3,000* ^
2. *Abbreviation for a pretty offensive swear (ni ma bi – your mom’s a ___, you can fill in the blank)* ^

Yan: Jian Rong is so good at face-slapping hahaha and more about Lu Boyuan and Jian Rong's history together was revealed~

Wei: I edited and prepared the page for all of Chapter 37 instead of 36 without noticing anything was wrong... Zero awareness lmao



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ICDI Chapter 37: I feel like our current mid laner is already pretty… good.

They had three practice matches that night with Fighting Tiger; TTC won two games and lost one.

If one had to pick the top three teams recently in the LPL, the majority of people would answer with TTC, PUD, and Fighting Tiger.

Each of these three teams also had their own style.

In TTC, the jungler drove the entire show, but the top and bot lanes could also step up and control the match. Now, with the addition of a new mid laner, the existence of a weak lane disappeared even more. The only disadvantage was that the new mid laner didn't have enough compatibility or coordination with the other members yet.

PUD was a standard Korean import team. A while ago, the import rule had been removed, and the restriction that "every team could only have two Korean import players" no longer existed[1]. After that, they immediately welcomed their new Korean import mid laner, Savior, bringing the number of Korean import players in their team to a total of three. Even the team's head coach was a Korean coach.

Fighting Tiger was nicknamed "the nursing home" by esports fans. The members' ages averaged to 24 years old, and they hadn't switched out their starters for the past four years. Even though their APMs and reaction

times had slowly worsened with age, their coordination across lanes was unparalleled.

“Fighting Tiger’s strategy is so flexible ah. In those three practice matches, they used a fast-push tactic, a mid-jungler cooperation tactic, and a jungler-support roaming tactic.” Yuan Qian gave a deeply moved sigh. “And they coordinated so well for all of them… who the hell knows what other strategies they have hidden up their sleeve.”

Lu Boyuan took off his headphones. “You’ll find out at the competition arena.”

Xiao Bai lounged back in his chair and asked, “What week are we playing Fighting Tiger?”

Jian Rong opened the match history for the round they lost. “The first week after Lunar New Year.”

The practice room quieted for a few seconds after he said that.

Sensing Xiao Bai’s astonished gaze, Jian Rong turned his head and frowned. “Am I wrong?”

“…no.” Xiao Bai blinked. “So you’re actually also the type to memorize the competition schedule ah.”

Jian Rong was puzzled. “There’s only fifteen other teams. You can remember it after looking at it once, do you need to memorize it?”

Xiao Bai: “…”

Was this just the retention ability of a seventeen year old teen??

As they were chatting, a line of text suddenly popped up in the custom lobby.

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu[2]: Anyone there? Is God Lu here, let's chat.]

[TTC · Road: Chat about what.]

Da Niu was 27 years old, the oldest among all of the LPL's active professional players and also the one with the most experience. Most people would greet him with a 'Niu-*ge*' when they saw him, including Lu Boyuan.

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: I've been wanting to see your Lee Sin.]

[TTC · Road: En, don't ban him next time.]

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Hahaha, that won't do, I'll be beaten to death by the coach.]

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Xiao Bai, your hometown is Shenzhen, right? Let's go back together for Lunar New Year?]

[TTC · Bye: Sure Niu-*ge*, when the time comes I'll reach out to you.]

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Okay. Soft, where are you from?]

Jian Rong stared at that message for a few seconds before he realized that the other person was asking him a question.

[TTC · Soft: Shanghai.]

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Oh. That's right, how come you guys haven't invited Soft into the group chat?]

Xiao Bai replied with a question mark.

Why else? Of course it was because they were afraid that he would start fighting with the others in the group chat.

As Xiao Bai chatted, he explained to Jian Rong, "We pulled together a private group with the professional players from quite a few teams. They often use it to go out for meals together, duo queue, and things like that. Of course, Squid's members aren't in it… do you want to join?"

Jian Rong unplugged his keyboard and carried it in his arms. "Are there a lot of people in it?"

Xiao Bai nodded and thought, *Almost everyone you've flamed before is in it.*

Jian Rong asked, very naturally, "Everyone in our team is in it too?"

Yuan Qian hummed. "Yup."

Jian Rong contemplated briefly before he 'reluctantly' responded, "I guess I'll join."

When Jian Rong was invited into the WeChat group chat, it was already three in the morning. Everyone else had gone to rest, only he was still playing ranked. By the time he looked at the group chat, there were already several dozen messages in it.

[Fighting Tiger Luoluo: Would any team be interested in scheduling a practice match for the day after tomorrow.]

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Welcome newcomer.]

[UUG Yaqian[3]: We're available. Who got added?]

[MFG Kongkong: We're also available! Luo-*ge* notice this pitiful Kongkong pls TAT!]

[WZWZ-Mini: It's actually someone who God Lu added 0.0, who is it, your team's little substitute?]

[TTC Xiao Bai: Er, it's our team's new mid laner.]

With that, the group instantly went silent for a few minutes.

[TTC Yuan Qian: Hahaha, our mid laner is different from how he is in his streams, he's very easy-going.]

[TTC Pine: .]

[TTC Xiao Bai: ^ ^]

Seeing no sign of Soft for quite a while, everyone thought that he had muted the chat and started to chat casually again.

[UUG Yaqian: Ask your teammates this and see if they'll believe it?]

[Fighting Tiger Luoluo: I thought that my educational level was too low and couldn't understand, so I specially went to search on Baidu what 'easy-going' meant.]

[WZWZ-Mini: He insulted pretty well during the spring season match]

[WZWZ-Mini: Typo, I meant he played pretty well]

Jian Rong wasn't interested in group chats, nor did he know what to say. He swept a glance over the chat before he went to put down his phone and continue playing ranked.

[R: @R-ong]

[R-ong: Hello everyone, very pleased to meet you all.]

A few seconds later.

[R-ong: [rose]]

—

On Sunday, Jian Rong got up an hour late because he had practiced for too long the night before.

When he walked into the practice room, he discovered that there were two empty seats. Lu Boyuan and Yuan Qian were both absent.

Jian Rong took a bite of his bread and asked indistinctly, "Where are the others? Don't we have a practice match soon?"

Recently, they had been having practice matches every day starting promptly at three in the afternoon, to the point that Jian Rong was almost accustomed to this kind of daily schedule.

“Today’s Sunday, what practice match… P-baby save me! This ADC wants to kill your little support!!” Xiao Bai found a chance to answer him, “Qian-*ge* went on a date.”

Jian Rong was startled. “A date?”

“Mn.” Xiao Bai glanced at him, confused. “Qian-*ge* has a girlfriend, you didn’t know?”

Jian Rong swallowed his mouthful of bread and shook his head.

For the most part, esports players were all robust and vigorous young men in their late teens or early twenties, and it was very normal for them to date. Shiliu had told him about some gossip concerning professional players before, but seeing Jian Rong’s disinterest, he hadn’t mentioned it again.

Xiao Bai didn’t look back as he said, “Qian-*ge* and my sister-in-law are pretty low-key, so it’s normal for you not to know. His partner is a female streamer.”

Jian Rong: “Female streamer?”

Xiao Bai gave an “en.” “Is that such a shock? Aren’t the people that we have contact with just this sort? Streamers, fans, staff members.”

Jian Rong thought about it before nodding in agreement.

“Speaking of which, did you hear about what happened with that European team recently?” Xiao Bai said, “About them recruiting a female member.”

Jian Rong opened the game client. “That female mid laner? Didn’t she retire not long after? Seems like it was because she didn’t have good coordination with her teammates.”

“You believe that?” Xiao Bai laughed. “Have you seen a photo of that female player before? She’s a beauty, and she also has a good figure.”

Jian Rong frowned and looked at him with a complicated expression in his eyes.

“It’s not that, what’s with that look?! I wanted to say, she started dating the team’s jungler just a few days after joining the team.”

Jian Rong was puzzled. “And then what? Not allowed to date?”

“…well, there isn’t actually such a rule. Almost everyone who plays competitively are guys, what club would add a freaking rule prohibiting workplace romance.” Xiao Bai pondered a bit before explaining, “Have you ever run into couples when playing ranked?”

Jian Rong: “There are a lot of them in Diamond.”

Xiao Bai: “You’ve seen how the couples interact, right? At low health, they’ll flash in and act like a shield, or they’ll pointlessly help their wife gank someone, that kind of behavior.”

Jian Rong instantly understood.

“If it was just that, it’d be fine, but they also fooled around in the base, even skipping practice to go on dates… in any case, not long after the team

dismissed the female mid laner." Xiao Bai shook his head and clicked his tongue. "Some time ago, Ding-*ge* thought highly of a female mid laner and originally wanted to bring her into the trainee team, but because of the European team incident, he shelved that idea. The girl said that the person she looked up to the most was my *ge*, so how could Ding-*ge* possibly dare to take that risk."

This was actually the first time Jian Rong heard about something like this.

He drank half of his milk, but there was still something he couldn't really understand. "Why did they only dismiss the mid laner and not the jungler?"

The practice room door was pushed open.

"Dismiss who?" The words floated over from above Jian Rong's head.

Jian Rong tilted his head up and met Lu Boyuan's eyes.

He swallowed the milk in his mouth. "...nobody."

In the sunlight, Lu Boyuan's eyes were a very light sepia color.

He glanced at the plastic packaging on Jian Rong's computer desk and asked, "Are you full?"

"I'm full."

"In the future, let Auntie make you food. One breakfast won't interfere with your training." Lu Boyuan shot a look at Jian Rong's game client. "Don't start yet. I'll turn on my computer and we can duo queue."

Jian Rong liked to duo queue with Lu Boyuan very much.

Only half of the reason was because he was strong.

“Jian Rong.” Through the headphones, Lu Boyuan asked, “Need blue?”

Lu Boyuan’s voice was naturally somewhat deep, and listening to it made the tips of Jian Rong’s ears itch. He glanced at the blue buff on him that was about to run out before he silently turned up the volume for the in-game voice chat. “Yes.”

“Mn.” Lu Boyuan pinged the enemy’s blue buff. He said mildly, “I’ll take you to get it.”

They duo queued together the entire day, and they even ran into Fighting Tiger’s Niu-*ge* in the middle of the night.

Niu-*ge* was playing Caitlyn, and after a team fight ended, Jian Rong fled with low health. From some distance away, Caitlyn released her ult towards him.

Caitlyn’s ult was targeted, and as long as the bullet left her gun, it would hit its target 100% of the time.

Jian Rong gave up on struggling and already prepared himself to recall to base for free after dying. He was about to pull up the shop and buy items when the sound of a flash entered his ears.

Lu Boyuan controlled Lee Sin to ward hop[4] and flash, brilliantly helping Jian Rong block the bullet at the very last second. Lu Boyuan didn’t have much

health in the first place, and after blocking that, he had less than 100 HP left.

Jian Rong was momentarily stunned.

“Don’t zone out.” Lu Boyuan said, “Run.”

[[All] Fighting Tiger Da Niu: God Lu, your team’s going to win anyway, can’t you just give me the kill]

[[All] TTC · Road: Mid is worth 400 gold, don’t want to give.]

[[All] Fighting Tiger Da Niu: You’re worth even more gold than him, were you not afraid of me taking you out with one bullet?]

[[All] TTC · Road: I calculated my health, you wouldn’t be able to take me out.]

Jian Rong snapped out of it and made his champion run towards their base, his mouse clattering as he clicked on it.

Fuck, it was all Xiao Bai’s fault for telling him some nonsense earlier that afternoon…

They queued from the afternoon all the way until late at night and only lost one game.

Winning consecutively would put people in a good mood. After that game finished, Jian Rong had just pressed ‘Find Match’ when his teammate canceled it.

Jian Rong subconsciously looked back.

Only to see Lu Boyuan let go of the mouse and lightly rotate his wrist, curling and extending his fingers. His voice was the same as usual. “Not playing anymore.”

Jian Rong watched him for a few seconds before he said, “Oh… okay.”

Lu Boyuan turned off his computer and glanced down at his wrist. After a long pause, he opened the drawer and took out a pain relief patch before putting it in his pocket. He stood up and started to walk out of the practice room.

“Captain.” As he passed by a certain computer desk, someone tugged on his jacket.

Lu Boyuan stopped. “Mn.”

Jian Rong stared at his wrist. “Does your hand feel uncomfortable?”

Lu Boyuan was silent for a few beats. “Mn, it’s sore from playing for a long time.”

Jian Rong let out an “oh.” “…that’s normal.”

Although he said that, he was still gripping Lu Boyuan’s jacket.

Even though Jian Rong had only heard bits and pieces of what Ding-*ge* said last time, for some reason he had never forgotten it.

He didn’t let go, nor did Lu Boyuan urge him to.

“I know a kind of massage technique…” A long while later, Jian Rong spoke. “My dad taught it to me, and I feel really good every time I do it. Do you want to give it a try?”

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow and stared at the little mole on Jian Rong’s nose for a bit. “Okay.”

They went to the living room on the first floor.

Jian Rong used his right hand to press against his left and demonstrated to Lu Boyuan, “Right here, rotate it like this while pressing down. You can use a little force…”

Lu Boyuan extended his hand in front of Jian Rong.

Jian Rong’s movements paused. “?”

“My hand is sore, I can’t press down on it from any angle.” Lu Boyuan leaned against the sofa, his shoulder propped against Jian Rong’s. He had exceeded the practice time set by the doctor today, so he really did feel somewhat weary. “You help me massage it for a while?”

Jian Rong gazed at his hand and didn’t move.

Jian Rong’s eyelashes were very long, and it was especially obvious from the side. Lu Boyuan watched him for a few seconds before he started to retract his hand. “Just teasing you…”

Jian Rong grabbed his hand.

In order to maintain a clear-headed state, Jian Rong would crack the windows open a bit when playing the game, so his hands were a little cold from the breeze.

“I’ve never tried to do it for someone else before.” Jian Rong paused briefly. “If it hurts or feels uncomfortable… let me know.”

Ding-*ge* and the assistant coach returned to the base, each person carrying two bags of crayfish.

When they were almost at the front door, the assistant coach remembered something and said, “That’s right, Ding-*ge*, the female player that you rejected last time went to be a trainee in MFG.”

Ding-*ge* said, “I know.”

The assistant coach cleared his throat. “Actually, I think that the young lady plays pretty well. If we put her in the second team and let her get some experience, maybe she could’ve even kept pace with the starting team’s rhythm…”

“She does play pretty well, but the risk was too high.” Ding-*ge* shook his head. “It’s because you’ve never seen the way that she looks at Road… if we really did recruit her into the team and they ended up living together all the time, who knows what would’ve happened. Forget it, forget it.”

“But it’s not like our team prohibits members from dating.”

“We don’t prohibit members from dating, but dating within the team is out of the question. Did you not see what kind of state that European team

ended up in?" Ding-*ge* pushed open the door to the base. "And we did the right thing by not recruiting her, I feel like our current mid laner is already pretty…"

Ding-*ge*'s voice petered out halfway through.

Seeing him suddenly stop, the assistant coach followed his line of sight, confused, and looked into the room—

In the living room, their ace jungler was sitting slouched on the sofa. His head drooped downwards, and he seemed to be nearly asleep.

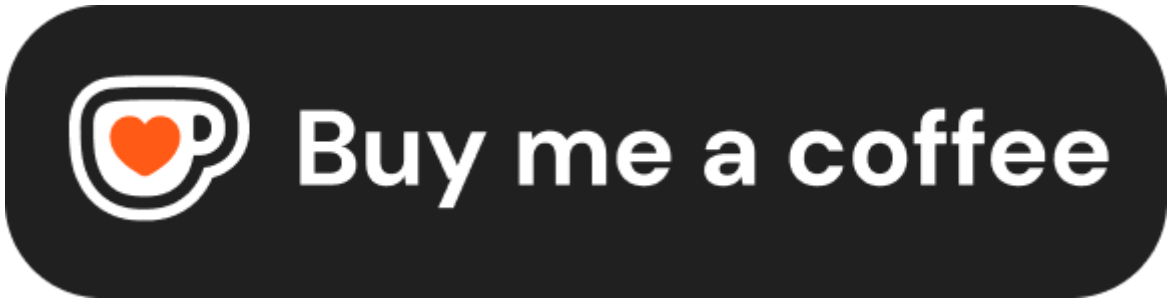
Their newly recruited bluenette little mid laner was sitting sideways. His head was lowered as he clasped their jungler's hand in his own, concentrating on massaging and kneading it gently and slowly…

Ding-*ge* remained frozen in his movement to enter. After a long pause, he finished the last word of his sentence. "Good."

Translation Notes

1. *The author notes here that as of right now, the import rule has not been lifted, but for the sake of ICDI just pretend that it has* ^
2. *Literally it means 'big ox'* ^
3. *Yaqian = toothpick, this author's names lmao* ^
4. *When a champion dashes/leaps over to an ally* ^

Yan: Never fear, Ding-*ge*'s words are not a flag there is much intrateam sugar to be had~



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ICDI Chapter 38: Belonging to LPL's #1 Troll Soft

"…what are the two of you doing?"

Hearing a voice, Jian Rong subconsciously stopped his motions and let go of Lu Boyuan's hand.

When the pressure on his hand disappeared, Lu Boyuan opened his eyes slowly and met the gazes of the two people standing in the doorway.

"Finished?" Lu Boyuan felt even more sleepy after dozing for a bit, and it took him a few seconds to wake up. He sat up straight and rotated his wrist before he turned his head and laughed huskily. "It feels much better, thank you."

Usually, Jian Rong would just massage his own hands for ten minutes and be done with it, but earlier, when he saw Lu Boyuan close his eyes and seemingly fall asleep, Jian Rong decided that he might as well just keep massaging. In any case, it didn't take much effort.

Jian Rong cast his eyes downward and nodded. "As long as it helped a little, that's good."

After understanding the situation, Ding-*ge* let out a breath of relief before immediately feeling startled—what exactly was he so nervous about just now??

Ding-*ge* coughed. "Um… we bought some crayfish as a midnight snack for you guys. Where's everyone else?"

Jian Rong said, “They already went back to their rooms to rest.”

Ding-*ge* put the food on the table. “They’re definitely not asleep yet, Xiao Bai just posted on Weibo a few minutes ago. Message them in the group chat and tell them to come down to eat.”

Jian Rong stood up from the sofa. “I can go upstairs to get them. I need to charge my phone anyway.”

Ding-*ge*: “Sure.”

Once Jian Rong went upstairs, Ding-*ge* instantly asked the person on the couch, “Your hand hurts? How long did you practice today?”

Lu Boyuan said evenly, “Not that long.”

“He started playing at four in the afternoon.” The assistant coach took out his phone to check Lu Boyuan’s match history. “His last game just finished thirty minutes ago.”

Lu Boyuan: “…”

“Yes, that’s not very long.” Ding-*ge* grinded his teeth. “Only eight hours. You’ve almost caught up to the trainees.”

“Shouldn’t the starters work even harder than the trainees?” Lu Boyuan cleared his throat. “It’s not that bad, I took a break in the middle.”

Ding-*ge* said, “Are you not aware of what condition your hand is in? Even if you rested for two hours in the middle, you still would’ve gone over your allotted time!”

“Enough, lower your voice.” Lu Boyuan glanced towards the stairs before swiftly retracting his gaze. “Don’t exaggerate it so much. I just feel a bit tired from playing for a long time, but my hand is fine.”

“BS.” Ding-*ge* said crossly, “Also, do we not have a physiotherapist in the team? If you make someone else massage your hand for you, what if they end up hurting it? And what’s more, Jian Rong also practiced for an entire day, but he still has to massage you after going offline… someone who didn’t know better would think that you’re bullying the newcomer.”

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. He actually hadn’t thought about it that deeply. It was just that when he saw a little friend grabbing onto the hem of his clothes and not letting go… he had ended up agreeing without thinking.

He said, “Let them think that, I’m not lacking this one accusation.”

From the moment Lu Boyuan entered the industry, he became the center of everyone’s attention. His popularity rose dramatically, but he was also subjected to controversy.

When he won Worlds his first year, the top two Korean teams had unexpectedly pulled out of the competition ahead of time, and the anti-fans had gifted him the title “freeloading king”; when he got MVP during competitions, the anti-fans called him the “resource prince,” a jungler who wouldn’t even let the mid laner have the raptor or wolf camps; like other professional players, he filmed business advertisements, but the anti-fans would say that he made a living off of his face and by currying favor with the female fans…

And so on and so forth. There were too many examples to count.

If he also got accused of bullying a newcomer, it really wasn't that big of a deal.

Ding-*ge* was rendered speechless for a moment before he instantly whipped out his phone and made an appointment with the physiotherapist.

The next day, Jian Rong walked into the practice room, rubbing his eyes. When he saw the person sitting next to his seat, he was startled for a few seconds.

Lu Boyuan was playing on his phone, and when he heard the noise, he looked up. "Morning."

Jian Rong was frozen in place, still holding his milk and bread in his hands. "…morning."

"Put the bread back, I bought breakfast for you." Lu Boyuan jerked his chin at the plastic bag on Jian Rong's desk. "Practice after you're done eating."

When Jian Rong returned from putting away the bread, Lu Boyuan was still sitting next to his computer.

The breakfast Lu Boyuan bought was congee, and it was still hot.

Jian Rong took a few quick sips. "I can play while I eat. Or you can log in first?"

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of playing Fight the Landlord. "Log into what?"

Jian Rong swallowed the congee in his mouth and asked indistinctly, “Aren’t we duo queueing?”

“No. I’m not practicing today.” Lu Boyuan said, “I’ll watch you play.”

Jian Rong: “……”

Jian Rong had been a streamer for two years, and he could unflinchingly play games under the eyes of several hundred thousand people.

Today, there was only one person sitting next to him, but it made him feel extremely on edge. He played every game as if he was in a competitive match.

Just as he was pushing the lane and attempting to find a chance to solo kill the enemy mid laner, the person next to him spoke leisurely. “Retreat a little.”

Jian Rong rapidly calculated his damage. “I can get the kill.”

Right as he said that, the enemy jungler’s Rek’Sai appeared behind him and coordinated with the other mid laner to kill Jian Rong’s Cassiopeia.

Lu Boyuan said mildly, “UUG’s mid laner and jungler are on the other team. Their jungler has a habit of usually ganking mid after level 7.”

“…oh.” Jian Rong pressed his lips together before he opened the shop to buy items. “I’ll make a note of that for the future.”

“It’s fine as long as you pay attention to it during ranked.” Lu Boyuan’s tone was natural. “During a competition, I’m there, so you can push however you

want."

Jian Rong bought the wrong item and silently went back to buy it again. "Got it."

When the staff members walked into the practice room holding a dozen or so packages, Jian Rong was in the middle of a game. At the sudden activity, he only swept a glance over before withdrawing his gaze.

A few minutes later, some small packages were placed on his desk.

Jian Rong was team fighting, and he didn't even look at them. "Wrong person, I didn't buy anything online."

"It's not that." The staff member explained, "These are all gifts that the fans sent over."

During the past few years, esports players had received a ton of attention, and the amount of fans that some popular players had even surpassed that of most celebrities. It wasn't that uncommon to receive gifts from fans.

Jian Rong asked, confused, "We can accept gifts?"

"We can, but we can only accept a few of them. We bring them over once we confirm that there's nothing dangerous inside." The staff member looked at Lu Boyuan. "God Lu, these are yours, should I put them on the table for you?"

Jian Rong glanced over.

Jian Rong had received three packages, and Xiao Bai and the rest also had around three or four parcels each. But Lu Boyuan…

Lu Boyuan's presents covered the ground, and from one look it was clear that there were at least ten or so gifts.

Lu Boyuan scanned the packages. "Didn't I say that I wouldn't accept these."

"Ding-*ge* said… these were all sent over by your big fans, so it wouldn't be appropriate not to accept them." The staff member coughed. "Don't worry, they're not expensive, just some handmade products."

After the staff left, Lu Boyuan got up to open the packages. Even though he had received gifts, he clearly wasn't in all that great of a mood.

As Jian Rong pushed the enemy's base, he couldn't help but frequently peek in Lu Boyuan's direction.

Discovering his gaze, Xiao Bai explained in a whisper, "Before, someone sent my *ge* some things that weren't very good."

Jian Rong asked, "What kind of not good things?"

"Just… bugs and whatnot. They left it at the entrance of the base, and we only found out what it was after opening it. It happened a long time ago." Xiao Bai paused. "But after that, my *ge* still occasionally accepted gifts. His fans are very diligent, and they often sent fan letters and such. All the way up until one time he received one of the latest phones, and the anti-fans unearthed the person who sent the gift. They found out that she was a little sister in her third year of high school and bought the phone using her

tuition money for college… my *ge* was cursed out very miserably during that time."

Jian Rong was filled with anger after hearing that. "What does that have to do with him? Why would they curse him out?"

"They said he was accepting expensive gifts, I suppose. Actually, my *ge* didn't even use that phone, and he even told Ding-*ge* to send it back, but we were in the middle of a competition back then. Ding-*ge* didn't have time and ended up delaying the delivery for a few days." At that point, Xiao Bai was a bit dumbfounded. "Afterwards, my *ge* was worried that the little sister wouldn't have time to sell the phone and wouldn't have money to go to school, so he even transferred her the tuition money."

"Xiao Bai." Lu Boyuan suddenly called his name.

Xiao Bai: "*Ge* I didn't say anything!"

"…" Lu Boyuan frowned and said, "Lend me the scissors."

After the game finished, Jian Rong turned his head and saw Lu Boyuan standing with his back to him, opening a package.

Inside the first package was a handsewn little cloth bear. It wore a mini version of the TTC uniform, and there was even a faint "*Road*" ID on it.

The handiwork was so-so, and the little bear's face was somewhat crooked.

Lu Boyuan stared at it for a few seconds before he reached out and tried to straighten the little bear's nose. After fruitlessly poking at it a few times, the

man's shoulders shrugged along with his sigh, and he put the little bear onto the shelf above the computer desk.

Inside the second package was a phone case. Jian Rong couldn't really see what was on the case; he could only make out the word "*husband*."

Lu Boyuan picked up his phone and hesitated briefly before he ultimately opened the cabinet and put the phone case inside.

Inside the third package was a handmade scarf.

Inside the fourth package was a pair of handmade gloves…

Jian Rong watched Lu Boyuan open all of the packages before he finally looked away, reassured.

"Xiao Bai." Yuan Qian walked over. "Help me take a picture. The fans sent me a scarf, I can use the photo as commemoration and post it on Weibo later."

Jian Rong glanced at him. Yuan Qian's game ID was even embroidered on the scarf, and the handiwork was very nice.

From a survey around, nobody had received particularly expensive gifts, but there was a lot of thought put into each present. Especially since it was currently winter, almost everyone had a scarf on hand.

Jian Rong stared at the three packages in front of him and licked his lips, an inexplicable sense of anticipation rising inside of him.

It had been a very, very long time since he had last received a gift. So long ago that when he thought about it, the only present he could recall was the admission ticket that Lu Boyuan had handed him.

Jian Rong found a nail clipper inside a drawer and carefully opened up the first package. The moment he opened it, he saw the list of goods that a Taobao shop had placed inside—

"Buyer: Soft's dear dad"

"Goods: Inner heightening invisible insoles made of silicone rubber, fully cushioned with magical abilities, cozy and unnoticeable, won't make the feet feel tired x2

Latest men's fashion heightening insoles, extra thick x2

Light and snug be yourself men's heightening insoles x2"

…

Xiao Bai scooted over curiously. "Let me see what your fans sent you—"

Bang.

Jian Rong closed the box heavily before he covered it with the upper half of his body, firmly pressing down on the opening!

Xiao Bai was given a scare. "…I let you see all the gifts that I got, you're not going to share yours??"

Jian Rong: "No. Leave."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Jian Rong chased Xiao Bai away and made sure that the opening to the box was completely shut. He still didn't think it was enough, and he took out tape and packed it back up.

After confirming that it was completely sealed, Jian Rong took a sip of tea to calm himself down before he continued onto the next one.

Inside the package were several rectangular boxes. Jian Rong frowned and took them out to examine—

"XXX bubbles hair dye, showing off 2020's popular color – deep purple."

Six boxes, six different colors.

Jian Rong took quite a few deep breaths before downing the entire cup of tea in one gulp.

The last package.

Jian Rong thought expressionlessly, if it was yet another load of nonsense… he would never accept gifts from fans ever again.

Most likely because he didn't really have his hopes up in the first place, when he saw a long gray-colored scarf in the box, his eyes immediately lit up.

Jian Rong took out the scarf and attentively stroked it while holding it.

The texture was very nice, and it felt extremely comfortable to touch.

The color was also quite good…

“What is this…” Xiao Bai didn’t give up and scooted over again. “Wah, this scarf is pretty good, it’ll definitely be really warm around your neck. Try it on.”

Jian Rong’s lips tightened, and he let out an “oh” while restraining a smile.

The scarf was too long, so it was a little difficult to put it on while sitting. After winding the scarf around his neck, Jian Rong lowered his head and was about to go get the other end of it when someone behind him picked it up for him first and handed it over.

Lu Boyuan said, “It won’t be warm if you wrap it around like this.”

Jian Rong nodded. “I know, I’m just trying it on…”

“Hey, there seems to be something written on the right side of your scarf.” Xiao Bai suddenly spoke, “Your embroidered ID, probably?”

Jian Rong put on a calm and collected expression and picked up the scarf to take a look. “Probably…”

When Jian Rong saw the words sewn on the scarf, his smile froze on his face.

Other people’s scarves all had their IDs embroidered on them in simple, uncomplicated, and very standardized English letters.

Jian Rong’s also had his ID, but there were many more words on his scarf compared to the others—

[Belonging to LPL's #1 Troll Soft]

There was another line underneath that one.

[If found but not returned, take responsibility for the consequences]

Jian Rong: "……"

Xiao Bai thought, *I must not laugh, if I laugh I'm finished and my life will perish here in this practice room today,* but dammit, he still couldn't help himself. "Hahahahahahahahahahaha—"

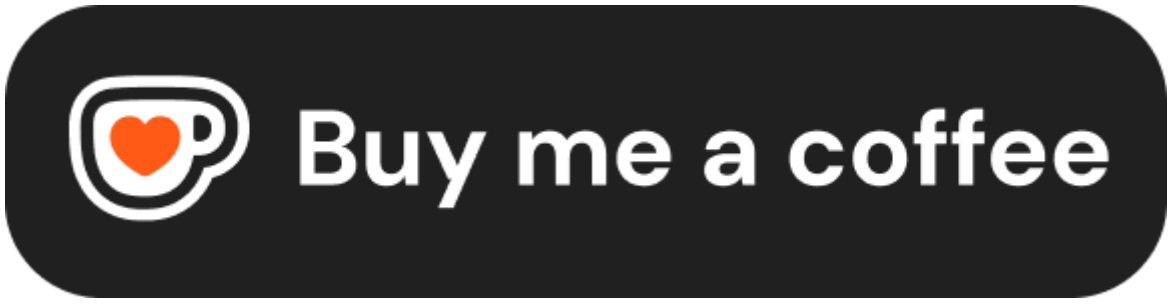
Jian Rong: "…"

Xiao Bai: "Hahahahahahahaha!!!"

The swear words were already in Jian Rong's mouth, but then he heard the person behind him also start to laugh.

Lu Boyuan's laughter was a little deep, and it wasn't as exaggerated as Xiao Bai's.

After a long pause, Jian Rong's head was patted gently twice, as if in appeasement. Lu Boyuan held back his smile. "It's not easy to embroider so many words… you should keep it."



ICDI Chapter 39: Men can also date men.

Thank you to Kitty and VitaB for the Ko-fis!

On the day of the competition, Shanghai dropped in temperature. Thinking that there would be heating in the bus and that the stadium would also be warm, Jian Rong went downstairs after just shrugging on his team jacket. In the end, he was shooed back upstairs by Ding-*ge* and forced to wear a down jacket over it.

Before leaving his room, Jian Rong hesitated for a very, very long time. Finally, he still tugged down the solitary scarf hanging on his wall.

"You're really using that scarf?" Right after he got on the bus, Xiao Bai asked him that question with wide eyes.

Lu Boyuan looked up. Jian Rong was wearing a white parka, and the gray scarf was wrapped around his neck. He had looped it around too carelessly, and his mouth was entirely covered up by the scarf, making his face appear even smaller.

"I'm wearing it backwards, you can't see the words." It was too cold outside, so Jian Rong exhaled a cloud of white mist when he spoke. "I'll take it off once we get to the stadium anyway."

Xiao Bai let out an "oh" before he looked at Lu Boyuan. "*Ge*. Why aren't you wearing the scarf that your fans sent you? I saw that the scarves you

received were all made very delicately, and there was even a tiny team icon sewn on one, it looked really good."

Lu Boyuan's head was lowered as he played on his phone. "I have too many, so I won't wear it."

Xiao Bai didn't understand. He was about to question him further when Yuan Qian helped answer instead from the side. "After accepting so many scarves, if he wears one that a fan sent, the other fans who also sent scarves will have complaints. It's the safest choice to not wear any of them."

Jian Rong stared down at his own scarf and thought, *As long as* laozi *receives just one more scarf, I'll use this ugly thing to pad the bottom of my chair.*

Even though that was what he was thinking, in any case the scarf was around his neck now. Aside from some rather unfilial words being embroidered on it, this scarf was still very warm.

There were two match slots on regular season competition days. Today, they were playing in the second match, and it only started at seven; their opponent was a team that had just come out of the LDL. The first match was Squid versus MFG.

After being scheduled to bump into Squid two times in a row, Ding-*ge* started to suspect that the LPL was purposefully screwing with him.

"Jian Rong." Before they got off the bus, Ding-*ge* instructed quietly, "Squid is in the break room next to us. If you see him, just pretend like he's air."

Jian Rong buried his mouth under his scarf. “Mn.”

However, once they arrived at the stadium, the first match had already begun.

When they turned on the television broadcast, they just happened to see Kongkong coordinate with his jungler to fight a 4v2 in the bot lane. With one ult from Kongkong, Doufu was directly swept away.

“Doufu is playing even worse than he did last week.” Pine concluded indifferently.

“I feel like he’s just average in the first place. The main thing is that his looks are alright, so he has a lot of female fans. They always like to brag about him being the next top ADC or something, and with so much boasting everyone ended up believing it.” Yuan Qian propped up his head and said, “His positioning is way too awful. In this wave, he managed to accurately walk into the enemy’s attack range with every step. That’s also a kind of skill…”

“Exactly, like hell he’s the next top ADC, can he compare with my P-baby?” Xiao Bai reached out to hook his arm around Pine’s shoulders. “My P-baby is taller than him, more handsome than him, and plays better than him!”

Pine: “Don’t put your arm around me.”

Though he said that, he didn’t actually shake him off. Xiao Bai jerked his chin at Jian Rong, who was sitting to the side. “What’s more, he was killed to that extent by Jian Rong last week. He probably still hasn’t recovered from that yet.”

Jian Rong shed his scarf and coat before lowering his head to zip up his team jacket. “Being trash is his own problem, it has nothing to do with me.”

Oh boy, each one was more arrogant than the last. Since it wasn’t time for their match yet, there were no outsiders present except for their team’s personal photographers. Ding-*ge* decided that he might as well preemptively lock the door.

He turned and saw that Lu Boyuan was still looking at his phone. Weibo’s interface was evident on the screen. Ding-*ge* lifted an eyebrow. “You’re about to have a competition, why are you still playing on your phone?”

Lu Boyuan didn’t look up, his voice unconcerned. “XIU sent me the new interview with HT’s mid laner.”

Everyone else was startled.

As the LCK’s number one team, the strength of HT’s players were irrefutable. Their new bot lane duo also consisted of two powerful players that had been directly promoted from the second team. The one publicly recognized to be the strongest in HT was their mid laner, Master. His champion pool was deep, and he could play both early and late game; he had almost no weak points.

During these past two competitive years, nobody had been able to break past HT’s mid laner during the laning phase. Kan being solo killed by him in competitive matches was already a familiar scene.

“What did he say?” Xiao Bai straightened up and asked.

Lu Boyuan said, “It’s too long, watch it yourself.”

Jian Rong couldn’t help but fish out his own phone as well. The moment he logged into his Weibo side account, the subtitled version of the interview appeared on his homepage.

The first half of the interview was still okay, as the questions were just about the game. But in the latter half, the reporter asked him which team left the deepest impression on him from this year’s Worlds.

Master thought for a long time. With this kind of question, a lengthy silence was also an alternative type of ridicule. Quite a while later, he answered with the LEC’s M7 team.

The reporter raised an eyebrow in surprise and questioned: This past season you were facing off against LPL teams during the semifinals and finals, shouldn’t you have a deeper impression of a LPL team instead?

Master nodded and said, Playing against a LPL team feels just like playing against a LCK team, which is why it didn’t give me any particular feelings.

The reporter asked: Why do you think that?

Master chuckled and said: Sorry, it’s probably because there are three players in their strong team that were washed out from the LCK. They’re full of Koreans, so it makes me feel like I’m competing against a team from my own competitive region.

“Fuck…”

It was unclear what part Xiao Bai was watching, but he couldn't help but let out a curse.

Jian Rong had one earbud in, and he lowered his eyes as he coldly continued to watch the interview.

The reporter asked: Yes, that's right. Even though the LPL has developed very well in recent years, they have indeed pulled in quite a few of our country's players. Then what about TTC? Currently, they're an all Chinese team.

Master answered swiftly: They're not too good. They rely on Road, but recently Road hasn't been doing very well either. They let a sub take the stage during the semifinals, so it was really boring to play against them.

At that point, Jian Rong locked his phone and tossed it onto the sofa.

"Fuck." Xiao Bai let out a second swear. "Who's the one who's not doing very well? *He's* the one who isn't doing very well, where's he getting this arrogance from?"

Though he was cursing Master, there wasn't much confidence backing his words. Because Kan had indeed been thoroughly beaten up by Master, and during that semifinals match, none of them had played well due to various reasons. In the end, HT had even brutally destroyed them at their own Nexus.

Jian Rong couldn't resist looking at Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan had already finished watching the video. His expression was the same as usual, and he was in the middle of replying to a message.

[PUD, XIU: He called our mid laner "a player washed out from the LCK," and now our mid is already frying fish[1] in Platinum with red eyes.]

[R: In that case, he still needs to train his resilience.]

[PUD, XIU: ?]

[PUD, XIU: Okokok, your team's new mid laner is very resilient. If Master was mocking Soft, I bet he would've instantly booked a ticket straight to Korea.]

Jian Rong was staring at Lu Boyuan's profile, lost in thought, when the other person suddenly turned his head and locked eyes with him.

"…" After being caught peeking, Jian Rong instantly averted his eyes, wanting to pretend like it was a coincidence.

"Have you played against Master before?" Lu Boyuan suddenly asked.

Jian Rong paused before he looked back and said truthfully, "I ran into him on the Korean server a year ago, but I didn't win."

Lu Boyuan gave a slight nod, wanting to say something else.

"He solo killed me once, but it's not a big problem." Jian Rong continued, "It won't happen again next time. Next time, I'll strive to not be solo killed, and the time after that, I'll strive to be the one solo killing him."

As soon as he said that, Xiao Bai's other hand instantly landed on his shoulder. "Badass! I believe in you! You can definitely do it!"

"Of course I can." Jian Rong said, "Get your hand off me."

Lu Boyuan watched him quietly for a few seconds. Jian Rong couldn't quite understand the look in his eyes.

Did he dislike the fact that Jian Rong had been solo killed by Master before?

Jian Rong should've phrased it in a more badass way earlier: next time he would strive to solo kill Master, that was how it should be.

He was about to correct his statement, but Lu Boyuan had already retracted his gaze and was discussing what to ban in the upcoming match with Ding-*ge*.

Not too long after, MFG beat Squid 2:0, and a staff member knocked on their door as a reminder to get ready to go on stage.

When Jian Rong walked out of the break room, he ran right into Squid again, who was preparing to leave the stadium.

Doufu was looking at his phone, his expression dark. His headphones weren't plugged in, so the sound was playing out loud; just by listening, it was clear that he was watching Master's interview.

Halfway through the video, Doufu cursed at the person on the screen without attempting to hide it whatsoever, "Dumbass…"

Ding-*ge* thought that this was way too freaking unlucky. He quickly stood to Jian Rong's left, attempting to prevent the two people from having any interactions.

As they passed by each other, Jian Rong swept a cool look over Doufu.

Doufu caught that glance, and when he saw that Lu Boyuan had already walked some distance away, he immediately stopped and asked irritably, "What are you looking at??"

Ding-*ge*: "He…"

"Nothing." Jian Rong said succinctly, "I was just surprised that you could occasionally say something in a human language too."

Doufu: "……"

—

To nobody's surprise, TTC won their second spring season match 2:0.

The MVP position was given to Lu Boyuan, and the one in charge of the interview was still Tang Qin.

Today, Tang Qin was wearing a long white sleeveless dress, and Jian Rong felt cold just looking at her arms.

"Tang Qin-*jie* has such a good figure, both tall and skinny," Xiao Bai said as he leaned back on the sofa and hugged his equipment bag.

While playing a puzzle game on his phone, Pine said, “If you don’t eat for a week, you can also end up looking like her.”

“Go play your game!”

Jian Rong propped up his chin and quietly watched the interview on the television.

Some people looked good in reality, but were very ugly on camera. Lu Boyuan was the type who looked good in person and on film.

He stood casually, with his back and neck straight. If he wore a suit, it could even be mistaken as a red carpet interview.

Tang Qin wore a sweet smile. Originally, there was a person’s width of space between her and Lu Boyuan, but as they chatted, she gradually grew closer.

Jian Rong’s brows furrowed.

Could they stand that close in an interview? Didn’t they think it was crowded standing like that?

Just as he thought that, he saw Lu Boyuan smile lightly as he finished answering a question before he unobtrusively shifted to the right a bit.

After replying to his girlfriend’s message, Yuan Qian looked up and sighed regretfully. “If only Captain could give me half of his handsomeness.”

“You already have a girlfriend, you’re fine either way.” Xiao Bai paused briefly. “Tsk, don’t you guys think that my *ge* and Tang Qin-*jie* look very well-matched standing together? It looks like a wedding ceremony…”

“Don’t think so.” Jian Rong coldly cut him off. “Not well-matched.”

Xiao Bai was startled, but then he immediately nodded understandingly. “Oh, you’re a fan of my *ge*, so it’s normal for you to have high requirements for his spouse. Not a match, not a match, nobody in this entire world is a deserving match for my *ge*.”

Jian Rong: “…”

Jian Rong didn’t feel like dealing with him.

Once Lu Boyuan returned to the break room, everyone collected their things and they left through the back entrance.

The car was waiting at the door. Jian Rong was too lazy to put on his winter gear again, so he just stuffed the scarf into his backpack and walked out carrying his jacket in his hand.

Since they were the second match that day, the fans hadn’t known when they would show up at the stadium, so there hadn’t been a lot of people waiting for them when they arrived earlier. But now that they were leaving, there were quite a few fans waiting at the back gate.

This was Jian Rong’s first time being escorted out by fans after a competition.

The fans were cheering very loudly, and the entire way to the car, they were almost all shouting Lu Boyuan’s name.

Jian Rong walked extremely fast, and he was about to get on the bus when:

“Soft—” A male voice sounded from the side. “Why aren’t you wearing the scarf I sent you!!!!”

Jian Rong: “…”

His footsteps froze, and he looked in that direction.

It was a man wearing a black parka and a black mask. He appeared to be fairly young, and his exposed eyes were actually pretty good-looking.

But that wasn’t the important point.

With nearly no hesitation, Jian Rong turned and walked over.

Jian Rong came to a stop amidst the screams and narrowed his eyes. “You sent that scarf?”

The man: “That’s right, I knitted it myself.”

“Knitted it… if you have that much time, can’t you use it to play games?” Jian Rong looked at him doubtfully and couldn’t help but confirm it again, “What are the words embroidered on it?”

“Belonging to LPL’s #1—”

“Got it.” Jian Rong frowned and interrupted him before he asked, baffled, “Why are you, a grown man, sending me a scarf? Isn’t that so corny?”

The man was startled, but then he said very naturally, “Because I like you ah.”

“If you like me, then watch the competition streams, don’t send useless things like this.” Jian Rong said.

“That’s not it.” The man smiled. “It’s the kind of like that makes me want to knit scarves for you.”

Twisting and turning. Jian Rong couldn’t understand what he was hearing, and when he saw that all his teammates were on the car already, his brows crinkled together. “Stop beating around the bush.”

The man thought a bit. “It’s the kind of like that makes me want to communicate deeply with you.”

“Deep—” Jian Rong was stunned, and he thought he misheard something. “…what? Say it one more time??”

Security guards were already approaching, and the man hastily said, “Little dumbass, add me on WeChat?”

Jian Rong was still digesting the man’s words when someone pulled on the equipment bag he was carrying.

Jian Rong subconsciously took a step back, and his left shoulder collided into the person standing behind him.

“Time to get in the car.” Lu Boyuan’s voice was mild and deep.

Jian Rong collected his thoughts after a few seconds and nodded. “Oh.”

“Hold on.” The male fan called out to him again. “Add me on WeChat ah.”

Lu Boyuan was still holding onto Jian Rong's bag, and he swept a very light look over that person. "He will not."

The person: "God Lu, it's not up for you to decide…"

"If it's not up for him to decide, then whose decision is it?" Jian Rong snapped out of it and rapidly restored his previous expression. He asked in reply, "Yours?"

The person: "…"

After getting in the car, the only seats left were two right next to each other in the back row. The others were all full.

Jian Rong sat next to Lu Boyuan, their shoulders pressing together. Ever since they started driving, he had been staring out the window.

"After we get back, you can consider practicing Azir."

When Lu Boyuan didn't receive a response for quite some time, he turned his head. "Jian Rong."

Jian Rong slowly looked over. "Ah."

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and met Jian Rong's gaze briefly. "What are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking," Jian Rong's expression was bewildered. "That person just now was a man?"

Lu Boyuan: "Mn."

Jian Rong: “I’m also a man.”

Lu Boyuan: “Mn.”

“Was he mocking me?” Jian Rong hesitated for a moment before he asked uncertainly, “Trying to say I look like a girl?”

Lu Boyuan stared at him for two seconds before he tilted his head away and laughed.

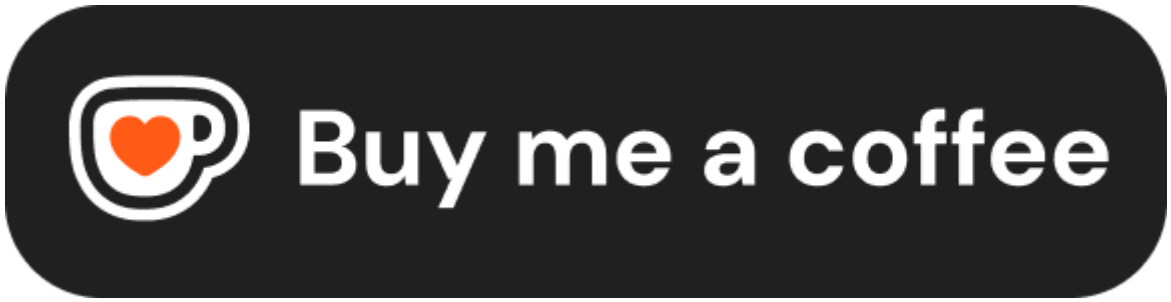
Jian Rong waited dumbly until Lu Boyuan finished laughing and looked back at him. The street lamps slid unceasingly across Lu Boyuan’s face, covering the man’s handsome features with a layer of blurry light and shadow. Jian Rong was reflected in the gleam of Lu Boyuan’s downcast eyes.

“…even though it’s still too early to teach you about these things.” Lu Boyuan lowered his voice, each word slamming into Jian Rong’s ears like a mini hammer. “Jian Rong, if both sides like one another, men can also date men.”

Translation Notes

1. *Frying fish refers to a player opening a side account to bully noobs* ^

Wei: LOL a whole new world opening up for JR ahaha this innocent baby I can’t



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ICDI Chapter 40: Everyone wait, let me ask @TTC · Road.

When Jian Rong heard that, he sunk into a deep silence.

A beat later, Ding-*ge*, who was sitting at the front, looked back and asked, "What are you guys talking about?"

"Nothing." Lu Boyuan hid his smile.

Ding-*ge* let out an "oh" before handing over his phone. "I'm watching HT's most recent match recording, take a look at this wave."

Only after Lu Boyuan put in his earbuds did Jian Rong recover, and he stiffly wrenched his head towards the window.

After standing in the wind and talking with that man earlier, his hands and face had still felt somewhat chilly upon getting in the car, but now they didn't feel cold at all anymore.

Although Jian Rong was still young, for better or worse he had floated through the internet for several years, so of course he knew… that men could date other men.

However, these were all things that he had seen on Weibo or in short videos, and what's more, he had only glanced at them briefly before skipping past. He never would've thought that he would be the one to receive a man's confession, which was why he hadn't been able to react in time.

Jian Rong watched as the skyscrapers continuously flew by the window, his heart beating extremely fast in the darkness of the car. He didn't even dare to move the arm that was touching Lu Boyuan's shoulder, staying tense from start to end.

Once they arrived at the entrance to the base, Xiao Bai glanced at him and asked, puzzled, "Didn't you think it was too much work to even put on your parka? How come now your mask is on too?"

Jian Rong's eyelashes were lowered, and his mask covered the majority of his face. "I suddenly felt cold."

After not really eating much the entire day, everyone had quite the appetite when it came time for midnight snacks—except for Jian Rong.

They sat on the living room carpet, treating the coffee table as a dining table. HT's latest match recording was playing on the television.

"HT's bot lane is getting along better and better." Yuan Qian praised.

"Isn't it just average? They aren't playing as well as they did in their former teams. But that's normal, when you change partners you have to work together for at least one or two seasons before you can really get along." Xiao Bai stopped halfway through peeling his shrimp to lean over and nudge Pine. "For example, me and P-baby."

Pine remained motionless and continued to watch the TV screen. "If you touch me with your dirty hand, I won't renew my contract next season."

Xiao Bai gave an "*aiya*" and was about to say something else when he sensed that there was an extremely intense gaze glued to him.

He turned his head and came face to face with Jian Rong, whose lips were pressed tightly together, eyebrows slightly furrowed. "...what? Your stomach hurts?"

Jian Rong stared at him for a while and couldn't help but ask, "What's your Ionia server ID again?"

"'P-Baby's Little Support' ah." Xiao Bai was furious. "You've played several dozen ranked games with me, but only now you're asking what my ID is?! Are you even speaking a human language!!"

Originally, Jian Rong hadn't given that ID much thought.

He paused. "I remember it, I just wanted to confirm it... why did you pick that ID?"

Xiao Bai's tone was natural. "I met someone called XX's Little Fairy before, and I thought it was pretty interesting so I ended up changing my ID. I also wanted P-baby to change his to Bai-Baby's Little ADC."

Pine: "I would rather delete my account."

"Then delete it, delete it right now, or else I'll look down on you!" After Xiao Bai attacked back, he said, "At first, I wanted to change it to keep things fresh, and I was going to change it back in a few days. But later I discovered that my streams became much more popular after I changed my ID, and I would always receive big gifts when I duo queued with P-baby, so I

didn't end up changing it back… what did they call this again? Oh right, selling rot[1]."

Jian Rong thought, *You've entered the wrong profession, you should've turned left and gone to the entertainment circle next door.*

Jian Rong gave an "oh" before he took a sip of water, planning to end the subject there.

"You don't say, this kind of strategy is actually pretty useful. You know MFG's Kongkong, right? He and his team's top laner aren't clean either! The official accounts take the lead in boosting the CP, and every time there's a documentary they only cut the shots with the two of them. I've seen through their tricks long ago." Xiao Bai swallowed his shrimp meat. "How about you give it a try too? P-baby and I can't cooperate with you, since we're already a pair on the surface. Qian-*ge* won't work either, because he has a girlfriend. Then that only leaves my *ge*, but doing this kind of thing with my *ge* is a bit dangerous, he has so many girlfriend fans—"

Jian Rong viciously choked on his water, and he covered his mouth as he continued to cough.

"You can even choke by drinking on water?" Xiao Bai patted his back for him to help him breathe before he continued his analysis. "But with how ferocious you are, those women can't out-flame you anyway—er, can't out-justify you. I'll teach you. Your first step is to change your ID, just like I did. I've even come up with a name for you already, you can be called 'Road's Little Mid Laner.' Or if you're a bit more courageous, you can directly choose 'Road's Darling Little Mid Laner'—"

If it weren't for the fact that Jian Rong was still coughing, he probably would've stuffed his fist into Xiao Bai's mouth already.

The sound of the door opening came from the side, and Lu Boyuan and Ding-*ge* walked out of the meeting room after they finished their discussion.

"Change what ID? Who's changing their ID?" Ding-*ge* asked after shutting the door.

"Jian Rong ah." The coffee table was only so big, and it was a little crowded for several grown men to sit around it. Xiao Bai shifted towards Pine and made some space for Lu Boyuan. "*Ge*, come sit here."

The space was limited, and as Lu Boyuan sat down while bracing himself using his hand, his arm pressed against Jian Rong's for a few seconds.

To make it easier to peel shrimp, Lu Boyuan leisurely rolled his sleeves up to his elbows. "What do you want to change it to?"

Jian Rong: "Noth…"

"The current choice is 'Road's Little Mid Laner.'" Xiao Bai chewed on a piece of shrimp. "I counted, I think 'Road's Darling Little Mid Laner' is over the character limit."

Lu Boyuan lifted his eyebrow very slightly and stared at the back of Jian Rong's head for a few seconds. "Is that so."

"……no." Jian Rong didn't dare to look at Lu Boyuan. He clenched his teeth and said, "I'm not changing my ID."

"Zhuang Yibai," Pine tossed a peeled shrimp into Xiao Bai's bowl. "Can you eat quietly?"

"I was just joking around." Xiao Bai ducked his head and swallowed the meat in one bite.

"It's better to not change your ID, if you do I have to let the LPL know too. It's pretty inconvenient." Ding-*ge* had already eaten dinner, so he only made some coffee for himself and took a small sip. "Now that we're done with the last match before Lunar New Year, let me tell you about our upcoming plans."

Lunar New Year was in the middle of the spring season, so the matches would halt temporarily for two weeks. However, the players' training definitely couldn't stop for two weeks.

Ding-*ge* cleared his throat. "You only have three days off this year for Lunar New Year."

"Three days?!" Yuan Qian was stunned. "How come we only have three days now? Wasn't it always five days before?"

Ding-*ge* stated, "This year's public holiday is only three days long."

Xiao Bai instantly wilted. "My home is outside the province. After excluding the time needed to travel, I won't even freaking have enough time to get a full night's sleep."

Pine asked, “Which three days will it be?”

“New Year’s Day to the third. But I talked it over with management, and they agreed to let you guys go on Lunar New Year’s Eve. You have to be back on the fourth. I’ll help you guys book your plane tickets tomorrow.”

Xiao Bai raised his hand. “I want to be in first class!!!”

Ding-*ge*: “I know, your backs are all precious. Since when have I made you guys squeeze in economy before?”

Jian Rong was busy eating, and he didn’t have the slightest reaction to this piece of disastrous news.

“No need to book one for me, I’ll be staying in Shanghai this year.” Lu Boyuan spoke mildly.

Ding-*ge* asked, “Why? Doesn’t your family go to Hainan every year to celebrate?”

“We aren’t going this year.” Lu Boyuan was putting on his disposable gloves. “Hand me a bottle of water.”

TTC’s members all had elitist tastes, and they preferred drinking mineral spring water over boiled water.

Xiao Bai picked up a bottle of unopened spring water from behind him. After handing it over halfway, Jian Rong, who was sitting on the other side, took it from him.

In passing, Jian Rong twisted open the bottle before setting it down in front of Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan's glove-wearing actions paused.

The others: "???"

The instant Jian Rong looked up, he saw everyone else's confused and surprised looks, so he was also startled. "What is it?"

"Damn." Xiao Bai was speechless. "Aren't you hella skillful."

Jian Rong was stupefied for a few seconds before he realized what Xiao Bai was talking about, and he immediately explained, "He's wearing gloves, and I saw that the bottle cap was a little dirty, so while I was at it I just… there's no other meaning to it."

Yuan Qian glanced at his hand and reminded, "You're also wearing gloves right now."

Jian Rong replied very fast, "I don't mind them getting dirty."

Everyone else went quiet again.

A few seconds later, someone picked up the opened bottle of water and took a sip before saying, "In that case, help me screw it on again?"

Jian Rong didn't look over, but he felt like Lu Boyuan was laughing. He reached out and screwed the cap back on.

Xiao Bai: “It’s an honor to meet you at last, you must be the legendary master of selling rot, right? I’ve successfully learned the trick, P-baby let’s also act like this next time.”

Killing a teammate would result in a penalty from the LPL.

Jian Rong closed his eyes and, with red ears, forced out a: “Get lost.”

That incident directly caused Jian Rong not to eat his fill at dinner.

They didn’t have practice that night, so when it was time for bed, Jian Rong turned off all the lights and pulled his blankets over his head, trying to force himself to fall asleep. He was about to try emptying his mind when a deep and low male voice spoke slowly in his head—

“Even though it’s still too early to teach you about these things.

“Jian Rong.

“If both sides like one another, men can also date men.”

Men can also date men.

Date… a man.

Jian Rong threw his blanket off and sat up!

Dammit.

He sat at the head of his bed, rubbed his face, and thought that he might as well just practice through the night.

Jian Rong picked up his phone and scrolled absent-mindedly through it, attempting to divert his own attention, but he surfed through most of his homepage to no avail.

He thought a little before he decided to switch to his main account and find some dumbass water friends to fight a bit with.

He didn't expect to receive several hundred mentions the moment he opened his main account.

Someone had recorded his entire conversation with that male fan. The person who recorded it seemed to be nearby, so the video was exceptionally clear.

Jian Rong cursed in his head and thought, *I'm probably going to be scolded by Ding*-ge *again tomorrow*.

Jian Rong watched the video for a few seconds before exiting it. The video was over a minute long, and he didn't need to watch it to know what the contents were.

He scrolled down the screen to check the comment section—

[Damn! There's a traitor among us!!!]

[Please maintain the distance of a dad and son with the little dumbass, those who cross the line will die.]

[Little dumbass, don't date early. Men and women both aren't allowed, or else I'll break the little dumbass' legs.]

That kind of style could still be considered normal, but even further down—

[When I was watching the beginning of this video, I was worried that this person was going to be beaten up by the little bluenette. Unexpectedly, not only did the little bluenette not punch him, he didn't even let out a single insult…]

[Right! I also thought it was super weird!! And Soft also accepted his scarf!]

[Are you all idiots? The little dumbass is obviously gay too, just look at those thin arms and skinny legs, so girly. He's definitely a 0^2 on top of that.]

[There are even people who like foul-mouthed fierce 0s?]

[Fuck what are you all implying? My son is so good-looking, even if he's a 0 he's definitely a charming and attractive 0!!]

Jian Rong: "?"

[Thanks for the invite, Soft's old man here. In the end, this still can't be hidden any longer. When he repeatedly rejected female streamers' invitations to duo Q and talk over voice chat, I understood everything. But a father's love is generous, and he's free to love whoever he wants. It doesn't matter if he likes men, women, or transgender people, I will always be his dear dad.]

[I'm a new dad. After smoking a pack of cigarettes, I've started to accept this reality a little. Asking Soft's old man, does he have a boyfriend right now?]

[He shouldn't have one yet, or else why would he go play competitively instead of dating? Unless it's because of Road?]

Jian Rong: "???"

[Damn, woken from my dreams by one word! I was just saying that this dumbass is quite strange! Look at how stingy he is, yet he still sends Road 100k yuan worth of gifts?? Is that rational??]

[Then does Road know about this?]

[Who knows, do you all think that Road is gay? It can't be that my son has an unrequited love, right?]

[Everyone wait, let me ask @TTC · Road.]

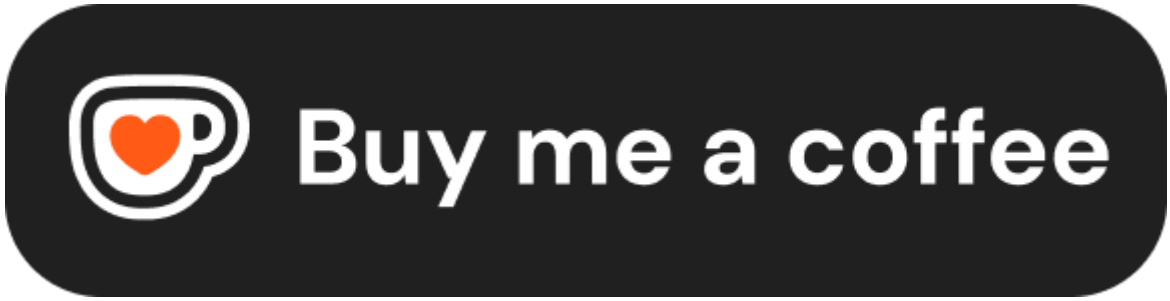
When Jian Rong saw that @, darkness flashed across his vision, and he felt as if he had instantly lost fifty years of his life.

Translation Notes

1. *I'm sure you've probably heard this term before, but it's basically fan service (or a bit more negatively, queerbaiting)* ^
2. *0 = bottom/shou* ^

Yan: In case anyone is curious, Worlds 2020 is going on right now in Shanghai! The semifinals were this past weekend (officially marking the would-be "start" of ICDI), and the finals next week will be a LCK team vs a LPL team, just like what happened at the beginning of this novel (HT/LCK vs

PUD/LPL). Maybe the author should look into gambling with their predictive talent hahaha



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ICDI Chapter 41: ...the way you speak is too disgusting. Scram.

The next afternoon, the moment Jian Rong woke up, he received Ding-*ge*'s message telling him to go over.

Ding-*ge* stared at his face for a while. "You stayed up late last night?"

Jian Rong's skin was pale, so the dark circles under his eyes were very obvious.

Thinking of how he had gone into seclusion for half of the night, clutching his phone, Jian Rong rubbed his eyes. "I had a nightmare and didn't sleep well. Don't worry, it won't hinder my training."

"Don't destroy your body just because you're still young. Giving you all ample time to sleep isn't so that you can pull an all-nighter." Ding-*ge* lectured him a little before he finally moved onto the main topic. "After coming back from Lunar New Year, your birthday will be coming up soon. Your eighteenth birthday is considered a milestone, do you have anything you want to do?"

"I don't." Jian Rong said, "Does that mean I can resume streaming?"

Not having expected Jian Rong to make that request himself, Ding-*ge* was momentarily startled.

He had been under the impression that kids only wanted to have fun, and that Jian Rong would ask to have a birthday party or something.

“Mn, I was planning to bring up the matter of resuming streaming with you.” Ding-*ge* coughed. “I took a look, your birthday falls on a Saturday. If you wanted to stream, it’d definitely have to be at night, since you have training during the day. I’m afraid that there won’t really be any time to celebrate for you…”

“There’s no need for that.” Jian Rong said indifferently, “I don’t celebrate my birthdays.”

Ding-*ge* lifted an eyebrow in surprise. “Alright. Also, we have to arrange some activities for the streaming day. After all, you’re resuming streaming, so you have to give your water friends some benefits. Do you have any opinions on that? We’ve come up with a few activities, you can pick and choose.”

What kind of benefits could there possibly be? He was just a video game streamer; at the most, he could carry water friends or draw some random water friends to come up and have an internal 5v5.

Jian Rong didn’t look at the program file that Ding-*ge* pulled out. “You guys can decide.”

Ding-*ge*: “Then how about this, the day before you resume streaming, we’ll open it up for the audience to vote on and they can decide which benefits?”

Jian Rong nodded: “That works.”

They chatted for another ten minutes before wrapping up.

Jian Rong had just pulled open the meeting room door when he heard Ding-*ge* sigh and say slowly, "Jian Rong, when you get to the practice room, could you help me call Xiao Lu over? I have something to discuss with him."

Jian Rong's footsteps paused, and he blurted out, "Can't you get him yourself?"

Ding-*ge*: "?"

"…" After a brief silence, Jian Rong said curtly, "Got it."

The closer Jian Rong got to the practice room, the slower he walked.

He took a deep breath and told himself not to panic.

Professional players were constantly practicing, so how could they possibly have the energy and courage to surf Weibo using their main accounts.

As soon as that thought emerged, Jian Rong remembered that Xiao Bai, who sat right next to him, used his main account to intimately interact with his fans every single day.

And also, Lu Boyuan had replied to that dumbass fanclub underneath Jian Rong's Weibo post last time…

No no no.

Even if Lu Boyuan looked at Weibo, he received hundreds and thousands of mentions daily. How could he possibly have seen that one dumbass comment?

Jian Rong comforted himself the entire way to the practice room, and he had already relaxed quite a bit. But when he saw Lu Boyuan through the glass of the door, sitting in his chair playing on his phone, Jian Rong's first instinct was still to whip around and go back to his room to pack his luggage and beat it.

Jian Rong took a step back and pressed his forehead against the wall, thinking: If, by any chance… if Lu Boyuan really saw it, what should he say?

– I'm not gay.

– I apologize on behalf of those unfilial water friends of mine.

– I joined the team because I sincerely wanted to play competitively, not because I wanted to get together with you.

– I don't have an unrequited love for you.

"Xiao Rong?"

Jian Rong had dithered for too long outside the door, and finally, someone inside the room couldn't bear to keep watching. The practice room door was half-closed, and Yuan Qian's puzzled voice floated out from inside. "What are you doing, wandering out there for so long… did you eat too much for breakfast, so you're walking around to help your digestion?"

When Jian Rong turned his head, he had already regained his usual expression. He pushed the door open and entered. "Mn."

Jian Rong slowly walked over to behind Lu Boyuan. Normally, he wasn't interested in other people's private business, but at that current moment, he wished he could glue his eyes onto Lu Boyuan's phone; he wanted to know what exactly Lu Boyuan was looking at.

Lu Boyuan was wearing earbuds, and his phone was playing a video of a match between two unknown teams.

After seeing what was on the screen, Jian Rong wasn't able to fully breathe out his sigh of relief before Lu Boyuan raised his head.

Right after Lu Boyuan woke up, his eyes would often turn into monolids, making him look colder than usual. "What's up."

Jian Rong pursed his lips. "Ding-*ge* is calling you over."

Lu Boyuan hummed. As soon as he locked his phone, Xiao Bai, who was in the middle of a game, suddenly asked, "*Ge*, have you checked Weibo today?"

Jian Rong's back went numb, and he froze on the spot.

Lu Boyuan stuffed his earbuds casually into the pencil holder. "No."

"My flash and ult from last night's final team fight got on the hot search! Hahaha!" Xiao Bai laughed and looked immensely pleased with himself.

Pine: "Ding-*ge* most likely bought it."

Xiao Bai choked. "So what if he bought it! Even if he did, it's only because I had some brilliant gameplay! Getting on the hot search means that I'm

awesome!!”

Jian Rong suspected that the heavens had specially sent Zhuang Yibai over to mess with his mind.

He hadn’t even felt this on edge when playing his last match point game for his Diamond 1 promotion series.

In front of him came the sound of a chair rolling against the ground.

Lu Boyuan stood up, and there was less than half a person’s width of space between him and Jian Rong. The milky shower gel scent that had been enclosed by the blanket for an entire night still clung to Jian Rong’s body. There were a few drops of water on his chin, probably from rinsing his mouth after eating breakfast and not drying it completely afterwards.

Jian Rong snapped out of it, and he immediately backed up to make way for Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan walked a few steps before he suddenly looked back. “Last night, that Wei—”

Jian Rong blurted out, “I’m not gay.”

In a split second, the practice room went quiet. Pine and Xiao Bai were in the middle of a critical moment for a team fight, but because of a mistake in their gameplay, their opponents seized the opportunity to successfully counter-kill them.

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow and paused for a very long time before he finished his sentence: “Last night, that winter scarf[1], tell Ding-*ge* to return it.”

“……” Jian Rong was dumbfounded for two seconds. “Winter scarf?”

“What else?” Lu Boyuan asked, amused. When Jian Rong didn’t respond, he spoke again. “It’s best not to accept gifts of this nature. Of course, if you like it, you can also keep it.”

Thinking back to what he had just said, Jian Rong resisted the urge to burrow underground and said with a stiff expression, “No, I don’t like it… I’ll tell Ding-*ge* to return it in a bit.”

After Lu Boyuan left, Jian Rong sat down in his seat and sullenly turned on his computer.

Xiao Bai scooted over and cleared his throat. “Jian Rong, so it turns out you were this straight ah. Does that mean I went too far with my jokes last night?”

“…I’ve always been very straight.” Jian Rong said listlessly, “You didn’t go too far, I don’t mind.”

Xiao Bai gave an “oh.” “That’s good then, I saw that you looked like you wanted to throttle me last night.”

You can even have this kind of enlightenment?

Jian Rong opened up the game client and didn’t say anything.

A few seconds later, Xiao Bai found his way over again. “In that case, you won’t look down on me and Pine, right?”

Jian Rong: “?”

Xiao Bai: “Don’t worry, the two of us are just selling rot on the surface. Our actual relationship is just like the one between you and my *ge*: unconditionally pure socialist teammate feelings… Pine, if you’re going to mid why didn’t you call me along!”

Pine didn’t bother looking over. “You’re too noisy.”

Jian Rong didn’t feel like bothering with him anymore, and he created a custom game before he pulled out the Azir that Lu Boyuan had wanted him to practice more last night.

On his way to the meeting room, Lu Boyuan was closing the apps running in the background on his phone.

The last background app was Weibo. The screen was still frozen on a certain Weibo’s comment section, and on it was written—

[Everyone wait, let me ask @TTC · Road.]

[Why do you have to @TTC · Road? You should know not to @TTC · Road, @TTC · Road is so busy, how does he have the time to look at Weibo?]

[I went to be a spy for a few minutes among @TTC · Road’s girlfriend fans. It turns out that @TTC · Road hasn’t dated before either.]

[@TTC · Soft dumbass you here? Come out and confess.]

After closing the app, Lu Boyuan slipped his phone into his pocket and opened the meeting room door.

Seeing him, Ding-*ge* lifted an eyebrow. "Why are you laughing?"

Lu Boyuan pulled out a random chair and sat down in it. "It's nothing. You were looking for me?"

Ding-*ge* told him about Jian Rong resuming streaming on his birthday and finished with, "…even though he was already popular before this, I still feel like we need to come up with some gimmicks. I want to arrange it so that you two will stream and duo queue together that night."

"I won't stream," Lu Boyuan said.

Hearing the rejection, Ding-*ge* was a little surprised. He was startled momentarily before he said, "Alright then…"

"It's fine if he just streams. If I stream too, the site traffic will be split." Lu Boyuan said, "I can duo queue with him."

Ding-*ge* nodded and checked something off in his notebook. He then said, "I've realized that you're very good to Jian Rong."

Lu Boyuan asked in reply, "Am I not good to you?"

"Can that even compare? We've known each other for so many years." Ding-*ge* paused. "But in contrast to the way you acted when we just met, the way you're treating Soft now is practically like the way you would treat your own son. I remember back when you first got to know Xiao Bai and the

rest, you weren't even willing to say an extra word to them when you guys sat together, never mind duo queueing."

Ding-*ge* mulled it over. "Could it be fate at first sight? From the moment you saw him in the livestream room, you just felt like he was especially to your liking?"

"His playstyle is to my liking." Lu Boyuan glanced at the time. "Is there anything else? If not, I'm going back."

"Nope… oh, one more thing." Ding-*ge* hesitated for a while before he finally said, "Earlier, Jian Rong told me that he was going to stay at the base for Lunar New Year."

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. "Is that not allowed?"

"Well, it is allowed, didn't Hezi spend the holiday here at the base last year?" Ding-*ge* said, "But since Jian Rong is young, and his family lives in Shanghai too, I spoke out of turn and asked him… why he wasn't going back to see his family."

Noticing that something was off about Ding-*ge*'s expression, Lu Boyuan looked up and waited for him to finish speaking.

"He said that he didn't have a family." After Ding-*ge* said that, he slapped a hand against his forehead. "I'm really something, if I have nothing better to do, why ask so many questions… do you think his situation is that he fought with someone in his family and left home, or… he really doesn't have anyone?"

Lu Boyuan was silent for a long time. “I don’t know.”

He recalled Jian Rong’s expression from just then when he came looking for him… it hadn’t been any different from usual.

The look on Lu Boyuan’s face didn’t change, but the laughter that had been present in his eyes when he entered the room was already completely gone. A beat later, he asked, “When you recruited him into the team, did you not clarify what his family situation was?”

“He had to fill out a form. When I questioned him about that earlier, he said that he filled it out randomly!” Ding-*ge* was filled with fury when he thought about that. “How could I have expected… this is my first time encountering someone who would dare to fake filling out a form. Fortunately, this form is only for internal use and doesn’t need to be handed over to the LPL.

“It’s my oversight. Also, recently I became aware of something… actually, a few years ago, he submitted a trainee application form to our team, but unexpectedly on the day of the tryouts, he canceled on us and went to be a streamer. The examiner staff still remembered him, and they mentioned it to me a few days ago when we ran into each other.”

When Lu Boyuan didn’t speak, Ding-*ge* asked uncertainly, “Do you think I should ask the team’s therapist to talk with him?”

Lu Boyuan collected his thoughts and shook his head a moment later. “For now, there’s no need.”

Back at the practice room, Jian Rong was wearing headphones and chatting with someone.

Lu Boyuan glanced at his screen; “Shiliu” was written at the top of the chat.

“Duo queue? Right now? …no, I’m not shunning you.” Sensing someone next to him, Jian Rong tilted his head to look before instantly tugging off his headphones to ask, “Captain, want to duo queue? I’ll practice my Azir.”

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and met Jian Rong’s gaze briefly. “Not today, practice by yourself.”

Jian Rong let out an “oh” and subconsciously wanted to ask Lu Boyuan if his hand was feeling uncomfortable again, but he was already walking towards his own seat.

Lu Boyuan didn’t touch his computer. After sitting down, he replugged in his earbuds and opened a certain video app from his phone home screen.

Even though StarTV was highly profitable and had a lot of capital, it wouldn’t save every single livestream replay for every single streamer, so you could only go to a video platform to try your luck.

Lu Boyuan searched “*Soft livestream video*” and started to flip through the results towards the earliest time possible. After a long while, he finally found a video from two years ago.

He turned up the volume and clicked on it.

At this time, Jian Rong hadn't been chased into the Beauty category yet. His hair was black, and his face was younger and softer than it was now. He looked just like a little youth who was still wet behind the ears. The only difference was that he was much cuter than other teenagers his age.

It was unclear what he had just gone through, but at that moment, his eyes were a bit red, and he pressed his lips tightly together while playing the game.

Around that time, Jian Rong didn't have much of an audience for his streams yet, and Lu Boyuan watched several minutes of the video before some comments finally appeared in the barrage—they were all from the same person.

[Little friend, why are you crying? Tell Uncle, Uncle will comfort you.]

[Or where is your home? What do you want to eat? Uncle can take you there? Add me on QQ and we can chat about it?]

[Uncle thinks that you play very well, your neck is also very pretty.]

Fifteen-year-old Jian Rong obviously also saw these comments. He frowned, and it seemed like he didn't really understand what this pervert was saying.

When this "Uncle" sent out his fourth harassing comment, little Jian Rong lifted his arm and wiped away his tears.

"...the way you speak is too disgusting." When he spoke, it was a bit nasally from crying. Because he was still at the age when his voice was changing, his

voice in the video was a bit more delicate than it was now. After he said that, he rubbed his nose. “Scram.”

Once he finished talking, little Jian Rong twitched his finger, found that pervert’s ID from his audience of only thirty people, and kicked him out.

Lu Boyuan couldn’t help but laugh.

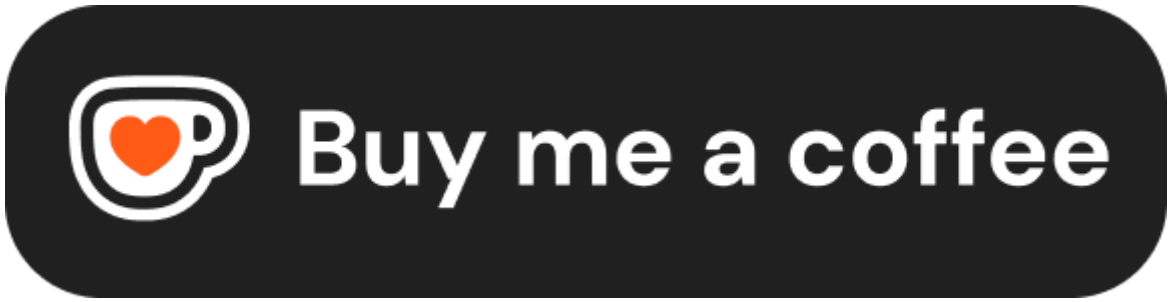
A moment later, he dragged the video progress bar back half a minute. And he watched again as Jian Rong wiped away his tears and rubbed his nose with a dark expression.

Translation Notes

1. *Sooo some wordplay going on here. I left the ‘Wei’ part of ‘Weibo’ intentionally, because the author uses two different characters (Weibo vs (winter) scarf). Both are pronounced ‘wei,’ but Weibo’s wei is first tone, while scarf’s wei is second tone. It’s not really obvious whether LBY was going to say Weibo the first time or if it was just JR’s paranoia, so I’ll just leave it up for interpretation. I translated it as winter scarf because it sounds similar enough to Weibo if you say it fast.* ^

Yan: Haha so many things happened in this chapter. (Rongrong: big gay panic) But most importantly, protect little Jian Rong at all costs!!!

Wei: Omg poor baby Rongrong :((Don’t cry bb LBY is here!!



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ICDI Chapter 42: ‘Road can only queue with me, idle onlookers quickly get lost’

Thank you to Su Yi for the Ko-fi!!!

As the break approached, they started to have more and more practice matches, but the atmosphere in the base was abnormally relaxed.

The day before the break, they finished playing a practice match with WZWZ. The moment they left the room, they smelled the strong scent of hot pot.

“Did that practice match make me lose my mind? How come I smell a faint trace of happiness?” Xiao Bai inhaled through his nose and asked.

Ding-*ge* knocked gently against his head. “I told Auntie to make hot pot. You guys have worked hard these past few days, eat some hot pot and relax. You all have early flights tomorrow, so there’s no more practice for tonight.”

Plates of meat and veggies covered the table, and the scent of hot pot filled the entire base.

The second team’s members were also leaving the next day, so Ding-*ge* decided to just send a WeChat to call them all over to eat together. He set up a sizable folding table to the side and let the others sit there.

Even though they lived near each other, Jian Rong hadn’t really interacted with the second team before. He originally didn’t talk a lot when eating

anyway, so now as the others all engaged in lively conversation, he simply shut his mouth and ate.

“How are you guys doing in the LDL[1]?” Yuan Qian raised his voice and asked the people sitting at the neighboring table.

Although they were members of TTC’s second team, strictly speaking they were considered a small branch team; their full name was TTC-K, and they were currently participating in the LDL. The teams that advanced to the finals and got first place in the LDL could apply to enter the LPL.

However, the outstanding trainees in big teams were often promoted to the first team’s substitute positions, or they directly joined the first team. As a result, it was very difficult for the second team to be as good as those new teams who were created solely for the purpose of breaking into the LPL’s quota.

Immediately, someone answered: “It’s not going too well, we just lost a match a few days ago.”

“It’s fine, there always wins and losses in competitions,” Xiao Bai said as he scooped up a shrimp ball.

When Xiao Bai was putting down the ladle, he used too much force and accidentally splashed some spicy soup onto Lu Boyuan’s hand as he was scooping up his own food.

Hearing Xiao Bai’s rushed “ah,” Jian Rong finally looked up from his bowl.

The soup had been boiling, and the chili oil was very conspicuous as it trickled down the back of Lu Boyuan's hand.

Jian Rong stared blankly for a few seconds before he swiftly picked up some napkins from beside him, wanting to give it to Lu Boyuan. His hand had already stretched halfway over when—

"*Ge*, are you okay?" The team's substitute jungler, Moon, quickly walked over from the other table holding a napkin box, which he handed over to Lu Boyuan. "Wipe it off quickly. I have some ointment over there, I can go get it for you."

"No need, it's just a tiny bit of soup, that's all." Lu Boyuan took some napkins from him and smoothly passed them off to Xiao Bai. "Wipe your mouth, the soup has already run off to your chin."

Jian Rong glanced at Moon's hands, which were holding the napkin box, before he silently withdrew his gaze and carelessly wiped at his own mouth using the napkins that he had just picked up. Afterwards, he crumpled the napkin up into a ball and gripped it in his fist.

Moon didn't leave either after delivering the napkins. He asked, "Captain, have you been playing with the new champion Lillia lately?"

Lu Boyuan said, "Played a few games."

"I've also been practicing with her, and it actually feels pretty natural…" Lu Boyuan didn't look back, and Moon continued to stand behind him, lowering his head to watch Lu Boyuan. "Do you think she can be used competitively?"

Lu Boyuan didn't stop moving his chopsticks. He said indifferently, "You should be asking that question to the coach instead."

Jian Rong was currently eavesdropping, and when he heard that, he was startled.

He thought that Lu Boyuan would give Moon an extremely patient explanation, the way Lu Boyuan did when the two of them duo queued together—telling Jian Rong when he should be pressuring the lane and when he should be pulling back.

"Didn't I already say something about that before?" Ding-*ge* took over conversation. "The new champion is too weak to 1v1 in the jungle. Even though she has an advantage entering small team fights, in all other aspects she still can't compare to those top tier popular junglers. Before we've come up with a practical strategy, we won't consider letting her go on stage."

After Moon sat back down in his own seat, Yuan Qian lowered his voice and said, "*Ai*... a few days ago, Moon asked me to ask you if you had any time to duo queue together. I was busy at the time, so I forgot about it and only remembered just now when I saw him again. I'll have to apologize to him later."

Jian Rong swallowed the food in his mouth. "Why didn't he go and ask himself?"

"My *ge* probably didn't add him on WeChat." Xiao Bai's cheeks were bulging with food, and his voice was unclear. "I bet he felt too embarrassed

to ask in the team group chat too."

Didn't add him on WeChat?

Seeing Jian Rong's surprise, Xiao Bai explained, "Back when the second team was just formed, quite a few players secretly sold my *ge*'s WeChat ID. Afterwards, my *ge* cleared up his WeChat and deleted all the people he didn't know from it… but *ge*, for better or worse, he's your substitute right now, so you should at least friend him."

"Too many requests, I likely accidentally missed it." Lu Boyuan tilted his head. "Jian Rong, a napkin."

Jian Rong froze for two seconds before he went to pick up some more napkins.

Lu Boyuan accepted the napkins and leisurely wiped off the chili oil on the knuckles of his hand.

Yuan Qian picked up some veggies and said, "I've realized something. Young teenagers all write their thoughts on their faces. When Moon was talking to you earlier, his face was covered by the words '*want to duo queue with Captain*'."

Lu Boyuan's voice was the same as usual. "We're both junglers, there's no point in queueing together."

Xiao Bai propped up his chin and stared at Jian Rong, full of interest. "Let me see what's written on Jian Rong's face."

Upon suddenly being cued, Jian Rong lifted his head only to see everyone else's gazes swivel towards him.

Xiao Bai announced, "It says—'*Road can only queue with me, idle onlookers quickly get lost*'."

Spotting Lu Boyuan's smile from the corner of his vision, Jian Rong set his chopsticks down. "Look again."

Xiao Bai: "What?"

Jian Rong pointed at his own face, and while he moved his finger, he recited, "Zhuang. Yi. Bai. Quickly. Die."

Xiao Bai: "."

After eating and drinking his fill, Jian Rong was about to go upstairs back to his room when the second team's members, who were getting ready to leave, called out to him. "Soft…"

Jian Rong subconsciously thought that some more people who weren't convinced by him had come along, and he looked back with a rigid expression.

At the head of the group was the second team's captain. When he saw Jian Rong's expression, he hesitated briefly. "Er, although you're in the first team, you're younger than me, so I don't know how to address you either. I can only call you by that name."

Jian Rong: "Need something?"

“Well, not really… we just wanted to add you on WeChat.”

“…”

“Is that okay?” That person paused. “We definitely won’t do anything like selling your WeChat. We were just thinking that if you were free, we could queue together sometime. Our team’s mid laner… yes, him, he’s already watched your Zed match eighty to a hundred times now!”

Jian Rong looked at the slightly bashful little fatty who was pushed forward by the others. He was silent for almost ten seconds before he pulled out his phone from his pocket. “…sure, whatever.”

—

In a rare display, the curtains at TTC’s base were pulled open bright and early the day before Lunar New Year.

Everyone wanted to go home earlier, so Ding-*ge* decided to just book morning flights for all of them.

Xiao Bai, dragging his three large suitcases behind him, walked out of his room and came face to face with Pine.

Pine was only carrying a backpack, and the expression in his eyes when he looked at Xiao Bai was hard to explain. “Did you break the law? Are you escaping the country?”

“What the hell do you know, these are all things I asked people to buy for my family. This suitcase is for health products, this suitcase is for massage

tools and skincare products, this suitcase is for my clothes…" Reaching Lu Boyuan's room, the door of which was wide open, Xiao Bai asked, "*Ge*, are you ready?"

Lu Boyuan's suitcase was already completely packed, and it was currently sitting next to his door, ready to depart.

His home was on the way to the airport, and Ding-*ge* insisted that he be sent back with them in their car.

Lu Boyuan was on the phone, and when he heard Xiao Bai's voice, he looked back. "You guys go down first. Try not to make so much noise, someone is still resting."

"Okay." Xiao Bai glanced at the suitcase on the ground and remembered that his *ge*'s hand was unwell. "*Ge*, is your suitcase packed? How about I help you bring it down, or else it'll injure your hand again in a bit…"

Right as he said that, the door to the room directly across from Lu Boyuan's opened with a click.

Jian Rong had randomly tossed on a jacket, and he was still wearing his pajamas. It looked like he had just crawled out of bed without even washing his face.

Xiao Bai was startled, and he subconsciously looked at the time. "…why're you up at eight in the morning?"

"I was woken up by you." Jian Rong's voice was hoarse, and he replied irritably.

Xiao Bai mimed zipping his mouth. “You can go back to sleep, I’ll be quieter.”

But Jian Rong didn’t go back inside his room.

He zipped up his jacket before he took a step forward and picked up Lu Boyuan’s suitcase.

Xiao Bai: “?”

Jian Rong ignored the dumbfounded Xiao Bai and asked the person in the other room, who was still on the phone, “Are you going to bring your laptop back with you too?”

Lu Boyuan, holding his phone, locked eyes with Jian Rong briefly. “I’m not.”

Jian Rong said okay before he picked up Lu Boyuan’s suitcase with one hand and went downstairs under Xiao Bai’s confused, doubtful gaze.

The car was already on standby outside the base, and Ding-*ge* was waiting for them at the entrance. When he saw Jian Rong, he gave a start. “Why are you awake so early… whose suitcase is this, Xiao Lu’s?”

Jian Rong gave an “en.” “Where should I put it?”

“You can just set it down here, when I go out I’ll take it with me.” After learning of Jian Rong’s family circumstances, Ding-*ge* couldn’t help but want to nag at him whenever he saw him. “During these next three days, be good at the base. I’ll reimburse any takeout costs, so order whatever you want. Auntie made some dumplings and put them in the freezer, if you want

to eat them you can boil them yourself. If you don't know how, then Baidu it. Since you're alone at the base, don't open the door for strangers, and if you go out you should also be more careful. Bad people always show up during Lunar New Year…"

"I'm seventeen." Jian Rong frowned and interrupted him. "Not seven."

By the time Lu Boyuan came downstairs, everyone else was already in the car. Only Jian Rong was still there, leaning against the wall and playing on his phone.

Hearing noise, Jian Rong instantly stuffed his phone back into his pocket and straightened up.

Lu Boyuan was wearing all black, and he also had on his mask and hat. When he was putting on his shoes, his eyelids drooped downwards, making him seem very difficult to talk to.

After putting on his shoes, Lu Boyuan tugged down his mask and lifted his head. That cold and detached aura suddenly vanished. "Being a door god?"

Jian Rong stuffed both hands in his pockets. When he heard that, he blinked. "No, once you leave… I'll lock the door and then go back to sleep."

Lu Boyuan asked, "Previously, you also celebrated Lunar New Year alone?"

Jian Rong paused. "For the past two years, yes."

Lu Boyuan let out an "en" before he opened the door, and a gust of cold wind blew into the room.

“I’ll be in Shanghai during these next few days.” Right before leaving, Lu Boyuan suddenly spoke.

Jian Rong was startled. “Mn?”

“If something comes up, just give me a call.”

TTC’s team car left the base and drove towards the airport.

Halfway there, Ding-*ge* let out a long sigh. “How come I have this sort of misperception that I’ve left behind a kid at home while I’ve personally gone out to travel? Should I have found a temporary housekeeper auntie to look after him at the base for a few days? In the recent New Years, public security hasn’t been good either… last Lunar New Year, a house was robbed near us. It would be one thing if something was just stolen, but someone ended up being injured as well.”

Lu Boyuan’s eyes were closed as he caught up on sleep, and he didn’t say anything.

Yuan Qian couldn’t help but laugh. “It can’t be that bad, in a few more days Xiao Rong will even be an adult.”

“If a thief really came knocking, what you should be worried about is how much medical fees you’ll have to compensate them with.” Xiao Bai teased.

Ding-*ge* propped a hand up against his forehead. “Forget it… shut up and go catch up on your sleep.”

Too worried to fall asleep, Ding-*ge* took out his phone to browse Weibo.

Because Ding-*ge* was still immersed in his compassionate father persona, when the new Weibo that Jian Rong had posted ten minutes prior popped up on his feed, Ding-*ge* momentarily didn't know how to react—

[TTC · Soft: I've tolerated you all for a very long time now. For once, the coach isn't at the base. Come on, let's chat a little.]

Translation Notes

1. *LDL = China's LoL Development League (previously translated this as LSPL but since I realized that's outdated, I'll go back and fix it.) It's the secondary league for academy teams (trainees)* ^

Yan: Ding-ge: *mother hens real hard*. Jian Rong: I don't need a dad. I am the dad.

Wei: Let's all just pretend like it's still Friday and this chapter was posted on time hahaha... ha.. Ahem, anyway, some exciting news: Cat Naps drew a beautiful piece of fanart of Rong Rong!! See it here and show them some love~

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 43: If that isn’t gay, then it would be really hard to accept.

Jian Rong’s original intention was to go back to sleep.

But after being blown by the wind for a bit in the entryway, he felt as energetic as an ox by the time he got back to his room. He couldn’t muster up any sleepiness after lying in vain on his bed for a few minutes. He wasn’t in the habit of gaming at eight in the morning, so he decided to simply prop himself up and play on his phone.

Then he saw that his main account on Weibo had received over a thousand private messages.

A portion of the messages were from Squid’s fans; they couldn’t out-flame those water friends, so they came to flame him. A miniscule portion were from his stream’s normal water friends, and they asked him how to do combos on Zed or what items to buy for LeBlanc when she was at an advantage or disadvantage.

Just from a glance, the remaining majority either consisted of “*Dad misses you*” or “*I’ve been wanting to insult you, dumbass.*” Jian Rong was too lazy to open them.

With one leg propped high over the other, Jian Rong looked through his messages for a long time before he posted that Weibo.

The day before Lunar New Year, most people were on break and at home, but there weren’t that many people surfing Weibo at eight a.m., so he was

still able to somewhat read the comments. Jian Rong scrolled down the screen and replied randomly.

[You've retrieved your conscience from the trash can?]

[TTC · Soft: No, I'm about to resume streaming. I'm afraid that nobody will watch that day, so I've emerged to satisfy you all.]

[Are you even speaking a human language???]

[Dumbass, you should probably log out of Weibo, I bet that the LPL's investigator employees have a special follow on your account. How unlucky would it be to get fined on Lunar New Year, don't spread your bad luck to your dad.]

[Should be fine, didn't he not get fined even with the way he shaded Squid before? A lot of pro players say "dumbass" "your mom" "I'm your dad" in streams without getting penalized for it. The reason he got fined last time was because he insulted that dumbass too fiercely.]

[Speaking of Squid, I kept refreshing Weibo throughout this dumbass' entire debut night because I wanted to see if there would be news about TTC and Squid getting in a fight backstage. Later, I fell asleep full of disappointment.]

[It's whatever if they fight, but with his physique, just who can he beat up? Dumbass darling, have you received the heightening insoles that Daddy shipped over yet? They're not obvious if you wear them, I don't even take it this seriously when I'm picking out underwear for my girlfriend.]

Jian Rong took a deep breath before he pulled up his bank account to check its balance. In his mind, he continuously told himself that he had to endure it no matter what.

One sentence was ten thousand yuan; insulting them equalled suffering a loss, insulting them equalled being fooled.

[TTC · Soft: Thank you. Send me your address, I'll drop by to wish you a happy new year.]

[Dumbass, Dad went to the stadium for your debut and held up a banner, are you touched?]

[TTC · Soft: Let me transfer you some money to celebrate the new year, don't come to future competitions anymore.]

[When the coach sees your Weibo post, he'll probably be so mad that he'll have a stroke.]

[TTC · Soft: Already asked, he's sleeping in the car. I'll delete these after we're done chatting, he won't see it.]

When Ding-*ge* got to that comment, he really did feel like he was about to have a stroke.

He said furiously, "Who told Jian Rong that I was sleeping in the car!!!"

Everyone else was startled, and Lu Boyuan, who was sleeping next to him, lazily opened his eyes.

"...I did." Xiao Bai looked stupefied. "He said that he sent you a message but you didn't answer, so he asked me what you were doing... am – am I not allowed to say that?"

Damn, this little troll was quite the schemer. Just when did he receive a message from him?!

Seeing Ding-*ge* wildly tousle his hair in anger, Lu Boyuan slanted a look over. "What's wrong."

"What else could be going wrong..." Ding-*ge* laughed out of fury. "Here I am, worrying about him like I'm his actual dad, while he's at the base causing trouble for me and also acting like his dad's gone out on a faraway trip. Just a few minutes after we departed, he instantly posted on Weibo provoking those water friends from his livestream room... this won't do, I have to contact someone and tell them to change his Weibo password first."

Lu Boyuan wasn't all that surprised. He only asked, "Did he insult someone?"

Ding-*ge* paused briefly. "Well, no, his replies just have a really ambiguous energy. But when the comments stack up later, a few trolls will inevitably show up. I'm afraid he'll have a hard time tolerating them with his temper."

Lu Boyuan's voice was slightly raspy. "You want to change his password when he hasn't even insulted anyone, what kind of reasoning is that?"

Ding-*ge* was stumped. "You're saying that.... I should just let him do whatever?"

Lu Boyuan didn't answer. Instead, he asked in reply, "In a few days, when he starts streaming, are you going to sit right next to him during every game and monitor him? Or are you going to give him a manual that clearly states what he can and can't say?"

Ding-*ge* was dumbfounded. To tell the truth, the idea of finding someone to keep an eye on Jian Rong's stream really did cross his mind at one point.

"It won't be interesting anymore if everything he says and does is according to the rules." Lu Boyuan swept a glance over him and reminded mildly, "He's a professional player. He's not here to be packaged up and debuted."

Ding-*ge* opened and closed his mouth. After being rendered speechless for quite a while, he finally said, "...aren't I just being concerned that he'll be fined again?"

"I don't think it's a big deal." Yuan Qian straightened up. "I read over Xiao Rong's replies, they're all okay, it's not at the point where he'll be penalized for them. He himself definitely doesn't want to be fined either, so he should be thinking before answering."

Ding-*ge* was silent for a few seconds, and he was somewhat persuaded.

"...then I'll keep observing, and I'll act if there are any signs that they're going to start fighting." A long moment later, Ding-*ge* muttered in bewilderment, "You know, instead of going back to sleep this early in the morning, why does he insist on seeking out unhappiness with those dumbass water friends?"

Lu Boyuan didn't say anything else. He took out his phone while maintaining his resting posture.

Jian Rong was still answering the water friends' comments, one reply after another. The total number of comments had already reached two thousand.

Neither side was speaking in a friendly manner, but when they were put together, there was a sort of inexplicable harmony.

[Last Lunar New Year's Eve, the little dumbass also posted a chatting Weibo. So is this going to become tradition?]

When Jian Rong came across this comment, he had one hand braced behind his head, and he was slightly startled.

Only when he went back and searched through his posts did he realize that he had indeed posted a chatting Weibo last Lunar New Year's Eve.

[Next time, can't you pick a different time to post a chat building? Bright and early on Lunar New Year's Eve, I was forced into helping out. Right now I'm holding a couplet in one hand and using my phone with the other.]

[Me too, I'm about to go wrap dumplings, I'll post a photo of the filling later for everyone to see. The club is on break now, right? Little dumbass, if you're slacking off and not helping out at home, are you not afraid of being beaten up by your parents?]

[That's not right, before he said that he's alone at the base ah. Is TTC still not on break yet for Lunar New Year's Eve?]

[They should be on break… an hour ago Xiao Bai just posted a picture of his suitcases, he said he's going home to celebrate the new year.]

[So you mean that I can also camp out for the little dumbass on next year's Lunar New Year's Eve? Dumbass son, take a look at the room that Mommy just finished cleaning. [photo]]

All the pictures that the fans posted more or less contained some festive ambiance. When Jian Rong saw them, he stared at the photographs blankly for a few minutes before finally typing an answer.

[TTC · Soft: There is no next year, don't wait.]

Jian Rong got up and poured himself a cup of water before he refreshed the comments again. The newest comment's style was somewhat different from the others—

[Beauty Kitty: I heard that you're gay?? Dumbass homo, can you quickly leave TTC? What in the world is wrong with TTC's coaches, bringing a homo into the base to live with Road? If he harasses my husband, are you guys going to take responsibility for it?]

Jian Rong just knew that he wouldn't be able to escape from what happened that day. There were quite a few inquiries earlier too, but he had ignored them all because he hadn't figured out how to explain this kind of thing yet. He had also deleted all the ones that had randomly tagged Lu Boyuan.

A message preview popped up at the top of his phone screen. [Ding-*ge*: Replying is allowed, but moderately.]

Jian Rong raised his eyes and deleted "*did homos dig up your ancestral tomb has modern science become too developed how come even a dumbass like you who discriminates against other people's sexual orientations knows how to use Weibo?*", before he typed out a new comment—

[TTC · Soft: Other people's sexual orientations are none of your business, I didn't try to get with your dad.]

In the short interval of time before his response, many comments had already appeared below.

[Brainless trash start dreaming before it's even nighttime. Go ahead and call Road husband, see if he takes a single look your way?]

[Everyone step aside, step aside, as a Chengdu fierce top, let me flame first]

[If you want to chase my son out so badly, why don't you buy out TTC? Also, upstairs is a liar, there are no tops in Chengdu.]

[Above, reported for suspected regional discrimination.]

As the conversation progressed, Beauty Kitty had already been forgotten. A few minutes later, they couldn't help but materialize again.

[Beauty Kitty: Hehe, you dare to say that you don't like Road? Before joining the team, you wore a hat with Road's name on it, and you also stalked Road's streams. Now neither the master nor the fans are admitting it?]

Everyone’s attention finally shifted back once more.

Beauty Kitty had long since heard that Soft’s fans had mouths that were each dirtier than the last, and they had already prepared themselves to have a duel of words when—

[What are you talking about? We do admit it, my son joined precisely because he was aiming for Road.]

[Beauty Kitty: ?]

[TTC · Soft: ???]

[@Beauty Kitty you missed some things. He also sent Road gifts worth 100k, the first person he followed on Weibo was @TTC · Road, his Weibo likes are also all of @TTC · Road.]

[He also pretended to be drunk and stuck to @TTC · Road, refusing to let go, hanging onto his neck like an apeman hanging onto a tree.]

[Apparently the two of them also came out together from the bathroom. If the little dumbass really was drunk back then, then it’s likely that Road also helped hold my son’s bird.]

[If that isn’t gay, then it would be really hard to accept.]

Helped……. hold……. bird…….

When he saw those three words, Jian Rong felt thunderstruck, and the image of Lu Boyuan’s hand reaching over to the front of his pants flashed across his mind.

Half a minute later, the style of Jian Rong's comment section below suddenly changed—

[Shit bros run for it! This dumbass is starting to delete his replies and blacklist people!!!]

[No way? Jian Rong you're not blacklisting that damn Kitty, but you're blacklisting your dad??]

[There goes another one of *laozi*'s side accounts, this unfilial son…]

These people's side accounts were neverending, and there was no way Jian Rong could delete them all. As things dragged on, he decided to just turn off commenting completely; what the eye didn't see, the heart didn't grieve over. After dealing with all of that, it was already almost noon.

Jian Rong shut his eyes and thought, *I'm a dumbass for wasting three hours on Weibo…*

After getting out of bed and washing up, Jian Rong made a casual bowl of noodles for himself and paired it with a rare poached egg. Once he was done eating, he beelined towards the second floor to practice.

He played all the way until two in the afternoon. When Jian Rong exited a game, he saw a friend appear online in the "TTC" game group.

When he saw who the online friend was, he paused before instantly sending a message over.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Are you at home?]

[TTC · Road: Just arrived.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Then want to play?]

A few seconds later, Lu Boyuan invited him into the party.

Lu Boyuan was fixing the keybindings for his computer at home. “I can only play one game, we’re going to be eating soon.”

“Okay.” Jian Rong said, “I’ll pick an early game champion then.”

“No need.” Lu Boyuan glanced at his little teacup pig, which kept rubbing against his feet. “Pick whatever you want to play.”

After entering the game, Jian Rong lifted his head to check his role. He hadn’t managed to snatch mid laner and had ended up being slotted into top laner.

Without a second thought, he started typing.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: #4 mid laner can we swap roles? Jungler and I are duo Q’ing, I’ll carry.]

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Not swapping~]

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Didn’t you say you didn’t have time to play!]

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Is the little piggy doing well?]

At first, Jian Rong thought that she was talking to someone else.

[TTC · Road: Mn.]

Jian Rong was startled.

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Take a picture of it so I can see~]

[TTC · Road: No time right now.]

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Alrighty. In a bit, come gank mid a lot for me pls, I'm afraid I won't be able to beat the other side.]

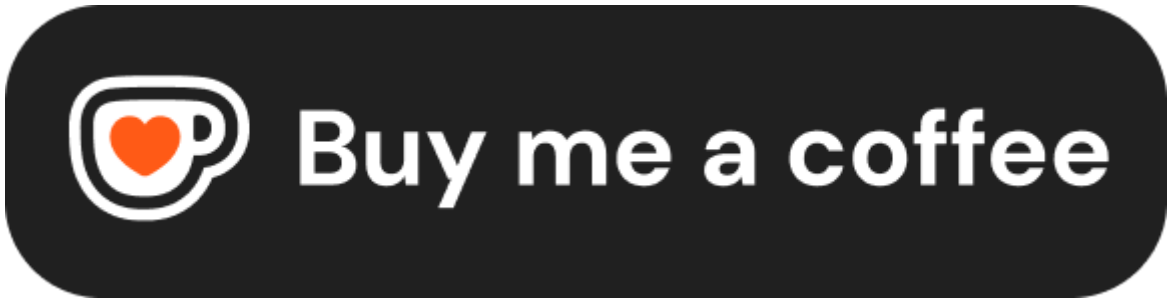
[TTC · Road: Depending on the situation]

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: ok~]

When they entered the loading screen and Jian Rong saw that Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry's Twisted Fate and Lu Boyuan's Evelynn were part of a couple skin, he couldn't help but ask, "Do you two know each other?"

"Mn, you do as well." Lu Boyuan shifted his mouse and walked out of the base. "She's Tang Qin."

Yan: In case it's not clear, LBY didn't change his skin to the couple skin – it's a little confusing, but as far as I can tell only Tang Qin changes her skin. Their champions just happen to have a couple skin available. LBY doesn't seem like the type to change his skin for her anyway, considering how hard hard he's cold shouldering her lolol



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ICDI Chapter 44: I can’t beat him.

Thank you to Kitty for the Ko-fi!

While pre-picking champions, it was possible to see what skins your teammates chose. Jian Rong remembered that before he had adjusted his runes, Tang Qin had been using the rare “PAX Twisted Fate” skin, not this 45 yuan couple skin.

Who would’ve expected them to match into a game with people they knew even while playing on Lunar New Year’s Eve. Jian Rong pulled up his teammate’s profile and took a glance at it. Tang Qin was a Diamond 1 player, and although her win rate wasn’t that high, it was still 53%. Her frequently used champions were all mid laners, so she should’ve been the one to climb up the ranks herself.

This game, Jian Rong was playing top lane Kalista. He absent-mindedly bought his items and walked out of the base. “Should we level 1 team fight?”

Lu Boyuan seemed to be occupied with something on his end, and he only answered a few seconds later. “No, they have Caitlyn and Blitzcrank. You can go to your lane.”

Jian Rong let out an “oh” before he turned around and walked towards the top lane.

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Aren't you guys really rather working too hard? Still duo queueing and training even on Lunar New Year's Eve?]

Though she said "you guys," it was obvious that she was just asking Lu Boyuan. Because he wasn't familiar with her, Jian Rong didn't reply.

As time dragged on, the sound of typing never came through his headphones.

A long while later, Lu Boyuan asked in voice chat, "Did you eat lunch already."

"I did." Maybe it was because before leaving, Ding-*ge* had instructed him countless times to eat properly, but Jian Rong added without thinking, "I ate noodles, with a poached egg."

Lu Boyuan chuckled. "…how luxurious."

Jian Rong was about to say something else when a message suddenly popped up in the chat—

[[All] Kongkong: Soft, what a coincidence, you also got placed into the top lane?]

[[All] Kongkong: God Lu and Tang Qin-*jie* are both here too ah… Happy new year, happy new year. Should I just straight up hand my points over this game and forget about trying?]

Jian Rong was startled. Only then did he realize the opposing top laner was actually Kongkong.

As two professional mid laners who both queued into the top lane, it was indeed coincidental.

[[All] TTC · Road: Happy new year.]

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: Then vote to surrender at 15 mins.]

[[All] Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Kong, thankfully you aren't playing mid, or else I'd be the one handing my points over…]

[[All] Kongkong: Can't surrender, my teammates said they're going to carry. *Jie*, what are you saying? Thankfully I'm not playing mid, you're duo Q'ing with God Lu right now, if I play mid wouldn't I just be ganked to death by him.]

[[All] Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: I'm not~ he's Q'ing with Soft.]

Kongkong was playing Camille. Originally, he and Jian Rong were peacefully standing at the opposite ends of the lane staring at each other, neither side interfering with the other. But as soon as he sent that message, Jian Rong charged forward and threw a spear at him.

[[All] Kongkong: ???]

[[All] Kongkong: You learn your Q at level 1 when playing this champ?]

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: Got a problem?]

[[All] Kongkong: Nope.]

Lu Boyuan killed the red buff. "Can you beat Camille?"

Jian Rong didn't even think about it. "I can."

Actually, Jian Rong's champion was a little restrained by Camille. Camille's passive shield was amazing for dueling, and regardless of whether it was before or after level 6, she could gain the advantage as long as she seized her opportunities.

Even though Kongkong didn't really know how to play top lane, he felt like he could still rely on his champion to restrain and beat Jian Rong.

Five minutes later, his fantasy was shattered. His health was pitifully beat down by Jian Rong until only a shred remained, and he rushed back under his tower. He couldn't help but type out a question, completely dumbfounded.

[[All] Kongkong: How come you even know how to play Kalista??]

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: Stream request]

[[All] Kongkong: ?]

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: Before, in order to earn money, the water friends could designate what champion they wanted me to play if they sent gifts. To tell you the truth, the champion I'm actually best at is Teemo.]

[[All] Kongkong: ……]

The announcement of Lu Boyuan killing the enemy jungler and getting first blood sounded. As Jian Rong went back to base, he couldn't resist switching to Lu Boyuan's POV to take a look. Evelynn just got a kill and still

had half her health remaining; Lu Boyuan was in the middle of killing the Rift Scuttler in the upper part of the jungle.

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Are you two in voice chat together?]

A long while later, Lu Boyuan responded with an "*in-game voice chat*" only after he finished clearing out the enemy's jungle.

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Oh oh. Hurry and come to mid to help me gank a few waves, it's a little hard for me to beat the enemy mid laner…]

Although Jian Rong wasn't at a disadvantage, he didn't have a large advantage either. Kongkong played very cautiously, and combined with Camille's high mobility, nobody had died yet in the top lane at level 8.

When he saw that message, he couldn't help but shoot a glance at the minimap. Lu Boyuan was already on his way to the mid lane.

Jian Rong stared at it for a few seconds before the sound effect of Camille's skill suddenly came from his headphones.

Kongkong had just finished consuming two health potions. When he saw that Jian Rong was distracted and had messed up his positioning, Kongkong instantly tried to use his E to dash up and take down the third of Jian Rong's health that was still remaining.

Jian Rong reacted extremely swiftly. He didn't have much mana left, and he quickly calculated in his head the amount of damage that he could output in this wave. After confirming that there was no way to counter-kill Kongkong, he didn't hesitate to retreat.

The moment he turned around, he saw the enemy jungler's Nidalee appear behind him. Jian Rong's eyebrows furrowed, and he knew that he wouldn't be able to escape this time.

The enemy top laner and jungler forced him into the recess by the path. Jian Rong continuously relied on his champion's built-in bouncing around to skillfully reposition himself, but unfortunately the space in the recess was too small. Not even someone using scripts would be able to outplay here. After dealing a few seconds of damage, Jian Rong pressed his lips together, already prepared to see his screen go gray.

At the same time as he was CC'd by Camille, the sound of a flash came from his headphones.

Evelynn flashed into the crowd and immediately hung a charm on top of Nidalee, followed closely by a burst DPS combo. Nidalee's health quickly dropped to 30%, triggering the condition needed for Evelynn to deal double the damage with her ult—

[TTC · Road has slain I Climb To Challenger For Your Dad]

Jian Rong's fingers paused.

Wasn't… Lu Boyuan going to the mid lane?

Lu Boyuan: "Kill Kongkong."

Jian Rong snapped out of it and didn't hesitate for a single second, daring to charge forward and spear Kongkong even with barely any HP left. Seeing that, Kongkong gritted his teeth, wanting to exchange a death for a death.

He was about to blink over and kill Jian Rong when he was instantly called back by one of Lu Boyuan's charms—

"Double kill!"

After getting the kills, they stood together and recalled to base.

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: ……Lu, weren't you already all the way to mid just now? I was ready TAT]

[TTC · Road: Hard to gank Fizz]

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Just come~ it'll be easy to gank him after I trick out his E skill.]

[TTC · Road: Depends on the situation, I'm ganking the disadvantaged lane this game]

Jian Rong stared at the two words "*disadvantaged lane*" for a few seconds before he pensively shifted his gaze away.

At that moment, Kongkong was streaming from his house.

"Soft is too abnormal." He finished buying items and left the base while harping, "Before God Lu came, I was almost counter-killed by him… but it's no big deal, jungler daddy said that he's only ganking the top lane this round. We'll be fine as long as we wait for our teammates' assistance. Soft is pretty good at positioning, we…"

When he got to that part, he just happened to enter the lane. After ensuring he had a dependable escape route that he could use to flee safely,

Kongkong tentatively moved forward and used his E. It landed.

Forget positioning, the other person hadn't even moved.

Kongkong: "?"

He dealt out a combo; again, all the skills landed.

Kongkong: "?"

Jian Rong returned back to his tower with minimal health. After consuming a health potion, he cleared his throat and called out, "…Captain."

"Mn."

Jian Rong said something that he had never once said before in his entire life. "I can't beat him."

His tone was utterly flat without any inflection whatsoever.

After profiting for two consecutive waves, Kongkong said, astonished, in his livestream room, "I've become stronger?"

Seeing that Jian Rong's health was so low, Kongkong couldn't help himself in the next wave. Before his own jungler had even arrived at the top lane, he rushed over to Jian Rong, wielding his grapple.

As a result… he blinked right onto the stealthed Evelynn.

Lu Boyuan effortlessly dazed him, and the minimal health Kalista was as bold as an ox. Relying on the presence of her jungler, she unceasingly

jabbed her spear into his face. A few moments later, Kongkong's screen abruptly grayed out.

It was normal to be ganked. At the base, Kongkong refreshed his items and said, "It's fine, I'm able to suppress Soft already. I'll definitely kill him this wave."

The barrage all said that he was shooting off his mouth.

Up until three minutes later, as they watched with wide eyes as Kongkong perfectly CC'd Kalista next to the wall and nearly swept her away.

Kongkong: "Didn't I say so, I've become stronger… fuck!!!"

A little heart appeared above his head—Evelynn's Allure skill.

In less than ten seconds, Kongkong was sent back home again.

During the third wave, Kongkong learned his lesson and specially called along his jungler.

"I can kill him this time for sure." Kongkong said, "In that first wave, Soft seemed to have just gotten lucky. I feel like he's only so-so at playing this champion, we're basically doing a 2v1."

Three minutes later, Evelynn showed up once again at the top lane. Meanwhile, that "so-so" Kalista charged to the very front and avoided Kongkong's movement-reducing skills while hopping and jumping all over the place and piercing his body full of spears. The moment Kalista ripped the spears from his body, Kongkong perished on the spot.

[[All] Kongkong: ……. @Soft?]

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: ?]

[[All] Kongkong: I just want to ask, how are you managing to be suddenly strong and suddenly trash?]

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: Oh, I'm an inspiration-type player. Whether I play well or not all depends on my mood during those few seconds.]

Kongkong: "?"

His horizons had been broadened.

[[All] Kongkong: So you're implying that every time before you go on stage in a competition, your teammates all have to coax you?]

Jian Rong wanted to laugh while reading his own message, and he had just typed out a single word when—

[[All] TTC · Road: That's how it is.]

Jian Rong: "…"

[[All] Kongkong: …incredible.]

Tang Qin glanced at her score: 1/4/1. It was truly a bit unsightly.

She looked at Evelynn, who walked right past her and was the other pair to her couple skin. Her heart felt sour, and she typed something out after a long time passed.

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Lu, how about I come and roam with you? Are you still going to the top lane in the next wave? I can immediately fly over with my ult.]

[TTC · Road: Let me ask]

Ask what?

Jian Rong had just gone back to base and was buying items. As he left the base, his eyes never strayed from the chat.

“Jian Rong.” Lu Boyuan unexpectedly called his name.

Jian Rong said subconsciously: “Ah.”

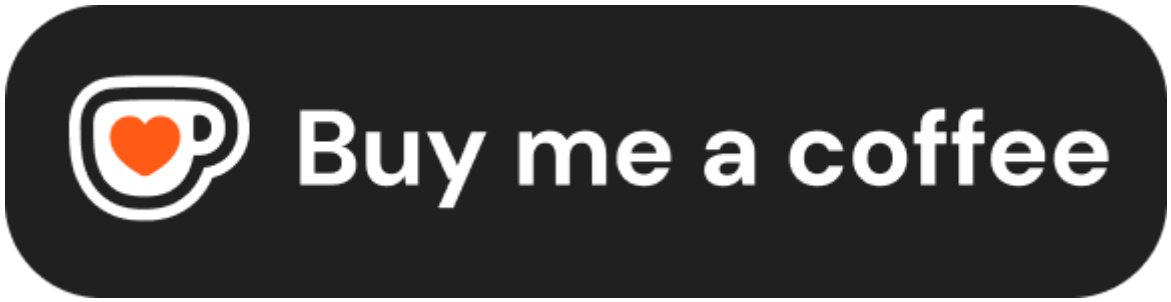
“Five kills, 200 CS…” Lu Boyuan listed out his stats and asked, “Can you beat him now?”

Jian Rong pursed his lips guiltily and said after a lengthy pause, “…I can beat him now.”

Lu Boyuan hummed mildly before he typed:

[TTC · Road: Not going to the top lane anymore. You should just farm by yourself in the mid lane.]

Wei: (if JR were a Pokemon:) Soft learned a new skill: Act Spoiled!



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ICDI Chapter 45: Have we met before?

Thank you to Ko-fi Supporter and Anon for the Ko-fis~

Jian Rong had long since cleared through the entire top lane. He didn't leave either after pushing all three of Kongkong's towers, and Lu Boyuan would occasionally drop by. The only thing remaining in the top lane now was a naked inhibitor.

Kongkong stood next to his inhibitor and watched Jian Rong, who was currently beating up Kongkong's minions not too far away. He was a little bit baffled.

[[All] Kongkong: Have I done something to offend TTC?]

[[All] Just Watch My Gameplay: Happy new year.]

In this game, neither side's junglers took care of their mid or bot lanes. On Jian Rong's team, although the mid lane was somewhat disadvantaged, the bot lane still progressed fairly smoothly. The top laner and jungler had even more so pierced through the enemy, causing their team fights later to be extremely relaxed.

Right after they wiped out the other team, Jian Rong heard the sound of chair legs scraping against the ground come from the other side of his headphones. Evelynn also stopped moving next to him.

Lu Boyuan gently pulled away the little teacup pig, which was gnawing on the shoulder strap of his equipment bag. He crooked his finger and

knocked it against the pig's head. "No biting."

After putting the equipment bag in a higher place, Lu Boyuan sat back in his seat just as the enemy's Nexus was destroyed. "*Victory*" jumped up on the screen.

Hearing Lu Boyuan return, Jian Rong closed the scoreboard and asked casually, "Is there someone next to you?"

Lu Boyuan also pulled up the scoreboard out of habit. "No, a pig."

It took Jian Rong a few seconds to understand that sentence. "The pig from your profile picture?"

Lu Boyuan gave an "en." "It was chewing on my equipment bag's shoulder strap."

Jian Rong had seen people keep pigs as house pets on the news. They raised and raised them until the pigs ended up weighing 250 kilograms; there were actually quite a few people who fell for such a trick.

Jian Rong hesitated briefly but still couldn't resist asking, "It won't become huge, right?"

Lu Boyuan chuckled. "It hasn't really grown in the past two years… unless something unexpected occurs, that shouldn't happen."

After the game concluded, the players would enter a post-game lobby. The messages sent in the lobby were visible to all ten players.

Probably because they had ended up crashing cars with professional players and an LPL female host, not a single player left the lobby.

[Kongkong: God Lu, you and Soft can go ahead and queue first. I'll wait until you two enter a game before matching, our ranks are too close together so it's easy to crash cars. I don't want to hand over any more points TAT.]

[Kongkong: Why are you two still not leaving yet…]

[Kongkong: Don't tell me that you've targeted my points!]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: If you used the time you were spouting BS to queue up, you would already be choosing your champion by now.]

[Kongkong: .]

Jian Rong didn't type anything else in reply, nor did he exit the post-game lobby for now. He glanced at the time and asked, "Are you going to eat at three?"

"No." Lu Boyuan checked his phone. His dad's messages were already covering the entire screen. "I have to go downstairs and play some chess with my dad."

Jian Rong said okay.

Lu Boyuan locked his phone. "Are you just planning to practice at the base today?"

Jian Rong shook his head. "No, I'm going out after I train for a little more."

“Mn, eat something more luxurious tonight, no need to save Ding-*ge*’s money.” Lu Boyuan’s phone rang, and he cast his eyes downwards at the “*Dad*” flashing across the screen. “I’m going now, have fun.”

After realizing Lu Boyuan went offline, Kongkong promptly sent Jian Rong a private message asking him if he still wanted to experience Kongkong’s super-strong jungling.

Now that he had gone through over two months of practice, Jian Rong was already used to duo and team queueing. He didn’t really hesitate before joining Kongkong’s lobby.

While they were matching into a game, Kongkong temporarily turned off his stream mic and asked, “Soft, do you maybe have something against Tang Qin-*jie* ah.”

Jian Rong was currently holding his phone and looking at Lu Boyuan’s pet pig profile picture. When he heard that, he paused. “I don’t. Why do you think that?”

“She called out to you earlier in the chat, but you never answered her…”

“I didn’t see it.” Jian Rong asked, “What did she say?”

“She wanted to know if you could make some room on your friends list for her.” Kongkong coughed. “And then you left the lobby.”

Jian Rong opened his friend requests and took a look; sure enough, Tang Qin was there.

He hesitated for two seconds before accepting the request.

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Thank goodness, I was thinking that you didn't want to add me because you thought I was too trash.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: ...not at all]

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Why aren't you Q'ing with God Lu anymore, did he leave after only playing one game?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: En]

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: I see... I thought that he was just lying to me about having to do something QAQ... oh right, when we were selecting champions before, I didn't notice that this ID was yours, which is why I didn't let you have the mid laner position, don't take it personally.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: I won't]

Whatever role you got assigned was the role you played; that was the rule. Of course it was nice if someone else was willing to switch roles with you, but it wasn't a problem if they didn't want to either. Jian Rong actually really didn't mind all that much.

Except for some reason, whenever he thought about how Tang Qin had specifically switched to a couple skin whose other half belonged to Lu Boyuan's champion, he kept feeling... somewhat uncomfortable.

Tang Qin's adoration of Lu Boyuan was way too obvious. It was clear that she didn't really intend to hide it, as she acted openly and conspicuously.

Jian Rong picked his champion expressionlessly, thinking that maybe Xiao Bai really had hit the nail on the head… because he possessed some of that so-called fan mentality, he had comparatively higher standards for Lu Boyuan's partner?

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Are you already Q'ing with Kongkong?]

Jian Rong gathered his thoughts and replied with an "en."

[Xiao Tang Also Wants To Carry: Okay, could I add you on WeChat? If anything work-related comes up in the future, we'll also be able to communicate right away~]

Jian Rong dithered briefly before he sent over his WeChat ID.

At four, another game ended. Jian Rong pulled off his headphones and let Kongkong know he was getting off before he powered down his computer.

He went back to his room and changed into a parka. Before leaving, he remembered that Ding-*ge* told him to remain as low-key as possible in public spaces, so he went back and put on his mask.

Recently Shanghai had been cooling down sharply. Currently it was almost evening, so the temperature was even lower.

The second he opened the front door of the base, Jian Rong cast his mind back and confirmed that he was wearing the thickest jacket that he owned at the moment, before he tugged his mask upwards and left.

He had called a ride in advance. On Lunar New Year's Eve, when scheduling an app-based taxi he had to wait ten minutes before someone finally accepted the request.

The driver had a dialect when he spoke. Most likely because it was a special occasion, he had been talking nonstop ever since Jian Rong got in the car. "Young man, why'd you come out on Lunar New Year's Eve? Not celebrating with your family ah? And you're going somewhere so far too."

The driver's laughter was clear and bright, and white mist constantly puffed out from his mouth as he talked.

Normally when Jian Rong took a taxi, he entered mute mode. He stared at the little couplet keychain hanging from the rearview mirror and finally got a whiff of some New Year atmosphere on that day.

The driver had picked up many clients before, and he knew that customers who were dressed as securely as Jian Rong typically didn't like to chat, so he reached out and turned up the radio volume. A jubilant song floated out, intermingling with the voice of the teenager sitting in the backseat.

"I have some business to take care of. I'll be going back once I'm done."

The driver was startled, but he smiled even more enthusiastically. "Okay, then *ge* will kick it into high gear."

The car drove for half an hour before Jian Rong returned to the neighborhood that he had been living in before.

The apartment in the little district was left behind by his parents. His computer setup at home was average, and it was also troublesome to pack and return home, so back then Jian Rong had only considered it for half a minute before deciding to stay at the base for the break.

After arriving at his apartment, Jian Rong opened the express deliveries that he had retrieved from the property management. He then rummaged through the closet and found the blanket that he had used last winter, along with some clothes he didn't wear, before he hurriedly left.

He carried the bedding and waited for a while on the first floor. Two minutes after five, a familiar orange tabby cat strode gracefully into Jian Rong's line of sight.

While the way it walked was fairly regal, the only issue was it was much skinnier than it had been the last time Jian Rong saw it. Its kitty face looked worn down and not energetic at all.

Jian Rong immediately stepped forward and picked it up before stuffing it into the blanket in his arms.

The orange tabby cat was filthy. Maybe because it still remembered Jian Rong, or maybe because it was just too cold, but it didn't resist him. It tossed its head before it let out a lengthy meow at him.

"Don't make noise." Jian Rong's tone of voice wasn't amiable in the slightest. He used the blanket to wipe off the dirty things stuck to the cat's tail before he brought it into the stairwell of the first building in the district. He wrapped it up in a blanket before putting it to the side; he then

crouched down, ripped open the cat food that he had just ordered over, and poured out a full bowl.

The orange tabby cat meowed at him again before it lowered its head and wolfed down the food.

It ate very rapidly, and it was unclear how many days the cat had gone hungry for. Jian Rong watched it for a while before he mumbled to himself, "…I thought someone would feed you."

A long moment later, Jian Rong sat down on the steps and poured water for it.

"Stupid cat." He braced his hands against his knees as he sat. "You're already a veteran stray, how did you end up in this state this year?"

He patted the orange cat's head. "Didn't you act pretty proud of yourself before? You thought that the food I bought you was too cheap and you weren't even willing to eat it.

"Is it because you grew fat and turned ugly, so nobody fed you anymore.

"How many times have I told you this before? If a person… if a cat wants to survive, no matter how bad the terms are, you still have to master some techniques. That Dragon Li cat from back then was so good at acting spoiled, rubbing against everyone it saw. You don't know how to learn a little from it?

"So stupid."

The orange tabby cat swiftly finished the entire bowl of cat food. While Jian Rong asked, “Are you a pig or are you a cat,” he replenished the food.

But the orange cat didn’t go to eat again. Instead, it approached Jian Rong and inclined its head, butting it against his calf.

“…there’s no use acting spoiled with me.” Jian Rong said, “I can’t raise you.”

The orange cat continued to bump its head against him.

Jian Rong furrowed his brows and reached out to rub its head a long while later.

They sat in the stairwell until the sky went dark. Only then did the orange tabby cat finally turn around and walk away.

Jian Rong followed it for a little and found where it was currently dwelling —in the neighboring district’s basement corridor.

Jian Rong spread out the blanket for it, topped up the food and water, and turned to leave.

“Meow.” The orange cat gave a cry and went forward to rub against Jian Rong’s shoes.

Jian Rong looked down at it for a few seconds before he used the side of his shoe to stroke it in return.

“I’ll come again tomorrow.” Jian Rong’s voice was flat. “You stay here obediently… don’t die.”

—

The Spring Festival Gala was playing on TV. The newest little popular idol was singing *Tian Mi Mi*[1] while wearing a business smile.

Lu Boyuan sat casually, making him appear starkly different from the middle-aged man sitting upright and properly across from him.

“Enough.” A middle-aged woman with her long hair coiled up walked into the room holding fruit. She shot a glance at the chessboard and smiled. “If you can’t outplay your son in chess, you should just admit defeat. Come over and eat some fruit.”

Papa Lu frowned. “What do you mean by ‘can’t outplay’? Am I not merely thinking about my next move right now? Don’t disturb me.”

Lu Boyuan couldn’t help but laugh. “Then take your time and think, I’m going to go eat fruit.”

The phone that he had placed on the table was continuously chiming. Mama Lu asked, “Are you not going to check your messages?”

Lu Boyuan sucked on a tangerine slice and replied simply, “Some group chats are sending red envelopes.”

Mama Lu nodded. “If you accept other people’s red envelopes, then you also have to send some out yourself. It doesn’t matter how much, but the intent should be there.”

Lu Boyuan said okay.

Mama Lu pushed the plate a fruit a little closer to him. “I watched you play a few days ago. There’s a new boy in your team, isn’t there? With dyed blue hair.”

“Mn.”

“From what I can tell, he seems to be quite young.”

Lu Boyuan chuckled. “Seventeen.”

Papa Lu snorted coldly. “So young, and already not engaging in proper work.”

A few beats later, he added, “Just like you!”

After so many years, Lu Boyuan didn’t feel like bickering with him over this any longer.

“Hey hey hey!” Papa Lu suddenly cried out. “I got it, hurry up and come here!”

Lu Boyuan was about to look over when his phone on the table suddenly rang; the caller was Ding-*ge*.

The moment the call went through, the other side asked urgently, “Where are you? Is it convenient for you to make a trip back right now?? Something’s happened at the base!”

A few minutes passed. Papa Lu grew annoyed from waiting and turned his head. “Why are you still not coming over yet… where are you going?!”

Lu Boyuan had already put on his jacket. He pulled open the front door and didn't bother looking back. "There's a bit of an emergency at the base, I'm going to make a trip back."

On Lunar New Year's Eve, the roads were clear.

Lu Boyuan drove for an hour and a half before he finally arrived at the base at 11 PM.

The villa district was brightly lit, and only two buildings in the middle were dark and gloomy.

Lu Boyuan hurriedly got out of the car without even turning off the engine. He quickly pushed open the large iron gates in front of the villa.

He instantly spotted Jian Rong, who was squatting with his back to Lu Boyuan, head lowered as he played on his phone.

The sky was too dark, and a thick layer of black covered Jian Rong's blue hair. He wasn't wearing a scarf, so a section of his slender and pale neck was revealed when he bent his head forward. His shoulders couldn't be considered very broad either, as he was curled in on himself, and he looked like a little hooligan who was blocking the path outside of a high school but hadn't developed fully yet.

An indescribable feeling of deja vu surged through Lu Boyuan. He furrowed his eyebrows very slightly as Jian Rong's appearance with black hair flashed unconsciously through his mind, and Jian Rong's figure from behind overlapped with a little figure pulled from somewhere in Lu Boyuan's memories.

Jian Rong was wearing earbuds and listening to music. An app with a red background popped up on Jian Rong's screen, and he smiled with satisfaction after seeing the sum of money written on it. He was about to send a "*thanks boss*" emoticon when he felt the light in front of him get eclipsed.

He jolted before he instinctively raised his head.

The streetlight illuminated the man from behind, and his shadow nearly engulfed Jian Rong entirely. Lu Boyuan looked down on him from above. His eyes looked like someone had placed a scattering of snow in them, and white mist gradually floated out between his breaths.

Jian Rong froze completely. A very, very long time later, he finally slowly called out a, "…Captain."

Lu Boyuan didn't respond. He asked, "What are you doing crouching here?"

Jian Rong said, extremely honestly, "Grabbing red envelopes."

Lu Boyuan: "."

Jian Rong snapped out of it and instantly stood up, patting off the nonexistent dust on his body. "The base's lock is broken, it won't open. As far as I can tell… it seemed like something had pried it open, so I gave Ding-*ge* a call."

Ding-*ge* said that he would send someone over right away, and he told Jian Rong that he must not go into the house no matter what.

Jian Rong hadn't expected Ding-*ge* to actually send over Lu Boyuan.

Seeing Lu Boyuan frown and remain silent, Jian Rong said, "I already reported it to the police. I just called them, so they should be here soon."

A long moment passed before Lu Boyuan let out an "en." "Go wait in the car."

Lu Boyuan's car was an SUV. The interior was spacious, and the heater was on.

Jian Rong extended his hands in front of the air vent, wanting to warm them up.

"Jian Rong." Lu Boyuan called his name.

Jian Rong subconsciously withdrew his hands and turned to look at him. "Hm?"

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of replying to Ding-*ge*'s message. Without lifting his head, he asked, "Have we met before?"

Translation Notes

1. *Link here if you want to listen lol it's a popular classic song ^*

Yan: More on their past is being revealed~ And also, how I imagine Jian Rong sitting with his back to LBY-

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 46: You're even worse at feigning sleep than you are at pretending like you can't beat your opponent.

Jian Rong didn't even think about it before nodding. "We have. I was also at the stadium during the last Worlds finals."

Lu Boyuan paused and laughed in spite of himself. "My memory isn't that bad. I'm talking about before the finals…"

After he finished sending Ding-*ge* a message, Lu Boyuan tilted his head and looked at Jian Rong's hair. "Before you dyed your hair, have we met before?"

Jian Rong opened his mouth but didn't say anything.

Because he also didn't know whether their earliest encounter could be considered as "meeting" one another. He was certain that at the time, Lu Boyuan definitely hadn't seen what Jian Rong clearly looked like.

In the end, Jian Rong said, "I've seen you before."

Lu Boyuan nodded. "Back when I was playing in the LSPL[1]?"

"Yes." Jian Rong thought about it and said, "I was there at the competition at the time."

Which was why he had that merch hat.

That way, it all made sense. Although it had been the finals, the LSPL was the secondary league, and esports hadn't become popular yet either, so the competition site was very small. With one glance, the entire audience could be seen.

But Lu Boyuan didn't really remember himself looking at the audience back then.

He knitted his eyebrows together a tiny bit before quickly relaxing them. "How come you're only wearing a mask."

"I accidentally got my hat wet, but I didn't blow-dry it because I was pressed for time. I returned the scarf."

Jian Rong had already donated his scarf from last year to the little orange cat. Since he hadn't really gone outside much this winter, he just never bought another one.

Someone knocked on the driver's side window. They both looked over simultaneously to see two police officers standing outside the car.

Lu Boyuan rolled down the car window. The police officer extended his head forward. "Were you two the ones who called in the report?"

Jian Rong: "Yes."

Jian Rong put on his mask and was about to get out of the car when the person sitting next to him gently pulled at his arm.

Lu Boyuan tossed the scarf that he just took off to Jian Rong.

Lu Boyuan's body heat still lingered on the scarf. Jian Rong gripped it and stared blankly at it for a few seconds. "No need, I'm not cold."

Lu Boyuan didn't reply. He opened the door and got out of the car while also tugging the collar of his turtleneck higher. He said to the police officer outside, "Sir, you've worked hard. The lock to our base has been pried open, and someone should have entered. We haven't gone inside yet, so we still aren't sure if there's been any damage…"

The car door closed, and Lu Boyuan's voice grew muffled from outside the car.

Lu Boyuan's back was to Jian Rong. His jacket was wrapped solidly around his upper body, making the man's broad shoulders and long legs even more obvious. Lu Boyuan's head was slightly lowered as he talked to the police officers, and he said something that caused the police officer to look over at Jian Rong, who was sitting in the passenger seat.

Jian Rong instantly snapped out of it and hastily put on the scarf before getting out of the car.

The police officer had already gained a rough understanding of the situation. He finished writing down his notes before saying, "Come on, let's go in and take a look."

Since they didn't know whether someone was still inside, the police officers prepared themselves before opening the door. After pushing open the front door, Lu Boyuan turned on the light in the living room.

The drawers underneath the TV were pulled out, and things were scattered all over the floor; someone had evidently rummaged through them. If the first story was already such a mess, it was apparent what condition the stories above would be in.

Twenty minutes later, they had more or less confirmed what was lost.

The desktop computers, televisions, and other large electronic devices were still there. All the cash had been stolen, along with Ding-*ge*'s and Xiao Bai's laptops, Yuan Qian's console, and Pine's shoes. Lu Boyuan also lost a watch.

"How much was your watch worth?" the police officer asked, opening his notebook.

Lu Boyuan contemplated. "Approximately 200,000 yuan[2]."

The police: "…"

Jian Rong: "…"

Jian Rong's face was full of regret. "Leaving a watch worth 200,000 in the base… why didn't you tell me?!"

Lu Boyuan: "I only just remembered that I owned such a watch."

Jian Rong: "…"

200,000 gone, just like that.

He should have just thickened his face and asked someone from the proprietor group chat from before to feed the little orange cat. Someone

should've been willing to help as long as he provided some money, and he could've gone back after the others returned to the base on the third…

With such a huge base, how did he possibly feel reassured enough to go out?!

"Alright then." The police officer went silent for a few seconds before he said consolingly, "We'll do our best to track down the thief. There are monitoring stations all around your area, so it should be very easy to catch the burglar. Even daring to barge into this kind of district, that thief really threw caution to the wind… thankfully your teammate wasn't home, or else I'm afraid that something might've happened."

Lu Boyuan walked alongside the police officer and let out an "en." "Yes."

After completing the inspection and before leaving, the police officer warned them, "You guys should either change this lock or stay elsewhere tonight. There are quite a few valuable items inside, I'm worried that the thief might slip back in the middle of the night to steal something else. It isn't safe."

"Let him try." Jian Rong grinded his teeth. "If I see him, I'll…"

"Understood." Lu Boyuan said to the police officer, "Sir, don't worry, we won't stay here tonight."

Once the police officers left, Jian Rong peered around, wanting to find a convenient weapon that he could use to camp out at the base and wait for the thief.

In order to verify that the remaining valuables hadn't been damaged, they had turned on the TV in the living room. After the Spring Festival Gala's host finished a resounding recitation of the script, the countdown to the New Year began.

When the host yelled out a "*one*," Jian Rong finally realized that he should be saying or doing something at this time. He swiftly retracted his gaze from the knife in the kitchen and looked at Lu Boyuan, who was standing next to him. "Happy New Year."

"Happy New Year," Lu Boyuan said at the same time.

Both of them paused, and then Lu Boyuan laughed.

Jian Rong watched him smile, and he thought that he should have first reported the robbery to the police before calling Ding-*ge*. With the police here, Ding-*ge* wouldn't have asked someone else to make a trip over, and Lu Boyuan would have been stepping into the new year with his family at this moment.

"Let's go." Lu Boyuan interrupted his train of thought. "Go upstairs and get some clothes, we're going back."

Jian Rong pulled himself together. "Going where?"

"My house."

In the car.

Jian Rong hugged his backpack as he sat in the passenger seat. "*It's better if I don't disturb you, I can just go back to my own place*" circled around inside his mouth for quite some time, but he never ended up saying it out loud.

They had just started driving for a short while when both of their phones rang simultaneously with the ringtone from a WeChat group call. Lu Boyuan didn't even have to guess to know which group chat it belonged to. He declined the call and said, "You answer."

By the time Jian Rong picked up the phone and put the call on speaker, the other people had already been chatting for some time.

"I was going to switch out that console anyway." Yuan Qian didn't really care. "If it was stolen, so be it."

Xiao Bai: "*Wuwuwu* this was the only year I didn't bring my laptop back. I have so many things stored on that laptop, what do I do if they can't find it?"

The sound of firecrackers roared from Pine's end, and he asked indifferently, "Porn?"

Xiao Bai was shocked. "P-baby, you're so dirty. Fine there are a few videos, I was even planning on sending some to Jian Rong as his eighteenth birthday present."

Jian Rong instantly interrupted. "Get lost, I don't want them."

“Hey you’re here?” Xiao Bai was eating something, so his words were muffled. “Don’t be so disdainful ah, those are all the best of the best. I’ll give you one chance to take back what you just said.”

With a few short lines from Xiao Bai, everyone’s gloomy mood from being robbed dissipated a bit.

“Enough.” Ding-*ge* cut them off and muttered, “How come Xiao Lu still hasn’t picked up the call.”

Lu Boyuan had one hand on the steering wheel. “I’m here.”

Ding-*ge* was startled. “You’re still at the base?”

“In the car, on the way back.” Lu Boyuan explained, “Jian Rong is staying at my place tonight.”

“That works too. I was going to find a hotel for him to stay in, but it’s fine if he also goes back with you.” Ding-*ge* spoke again, “Jian Rong, you weren’t given a scare, were you?”

Jian Rong watched the flurries of snow that had just started falling outside the window. “No.”

Ding-*ge* let out a sigh of relief. “That’s good. Let me know in the group chat when you guys get back, so I can be at ease.”

Xiao Bai and the rest continued to chat for quite some time in the call. After hanging up, his phone showed that they had been calling for forty minutes.

Jian Rong locked his screen. “We’re not there yet?”

Lu Boyuan glanced at the navigation system. “There’s still a while to go.”

Jian Rong was astonished. “You… drove for so long to come over?”

Lu Boyuan hummed. “It’s been too long since I last drove, I was a little unused to it. First sleep for a bit, I’ll wake you once we get there. Do you know how to adjust the seat?”

Jian Rong sat up straight and shook his head. “It’s fine, I’m not sleepy.”

Although that’s what he said, when Lu Boyuan drove into a gas station, Jian Rong had already fallen asleep with his head tilted to the side.

The light from the gas station drifted in from the car window, casting long shadows underneath Jian Rong’s eyelashes. Lu Boyuan stared at the mole on the tip of Jian Rong’s nose for a few seconds, only looking away once an employee at the gas station walked over to the car.

Lu Boyuan rolled down the window and held a finger up to his lips in a ‘*shh*’ gesture. He said quietly, “Top it up, thank you.”

While the gas was being filled, Jian Rong frowned and shifted his head, as if he wasn’t sleeping very comfortably.

Sensing the movement, Lu Boyuan glanced over at him again before quickly withdrawing his gaze.

A few seconds later, Lu Boyuan unobtrusively unbuckled his seatbelt, opened the door, and got out of the car.

He pulled open the passenger side's door. He stretched one hand underneath the seat, fumbling around for the button, while he pressed his other hand against the top of Jian Rong's head, slowly leaning the seat all the way back.

Jian Rong's hair was extremely soft. Everyone said that dyeing your hair damaged it, but Jian Rong's hair wasn't really affected even after he had touched up his color so many times. Even after Lu Boyuan released him, the soft sensation continued to linger in his palm.

Two minutes later, Lu Boyuan returned to the driver's seat, started the car, and drove out of the gas station.

Lu Boyuan might have said that he was a little unused to it, but his driving was very steady.

The streetlamps crisscrossed and slanted their light into the car. Half a minute passed, and Jian Rong stealthily opened his eyes.

Lu Boyuan's jawline was sharp and clearcut, smooth and defined. When he swallowed, his Adam's apple, a symbol of masculinity, bobbed very lightly.

Thirteen-year-old Jian Rong thought that Lu Boyuan was the most handsome man in the entire world; seventeen-year-old Jian Rong still did as well.

A very long time ago, Jian Rong had also once looked at him like this… perhaps his angle back then had been even a bit lower.

At that time, Jian Rong's job application had just been rejected by the boss of the internet cafe.

Jian Rong said, I know that you hire child labor here, the manager in charge of the second computer section is only sixteen. I know everything, and also he doesn't play as well as I do in the game!

A thirteen-year-old child's voice was very loud, and all the customers sitting nearby were laughing.

The internet cafe boss scowled and said that a sixteen-year-old was child labor, but you, a thirteen-year-old, would be damn baby labor. Hurry up and scram, don't disturb *laozi*'s business.

After that, Jian Rong was driven out. By that time, he had already visited quite a few shops, and he was truly tired. As a result, he patted his pants and sat down at the entrance of the internet cafe, freeloading off of the air conditioning. Even after the boss verbally tried to chase him away numerous times, he lounged around and refused to leave.

Until someone patted the top of his head. Jian Rong covered his head and swiveled around. "I already said I'm leaving soon—"

When he saw unfamiliar blue jeans, Jian Rong froze momentarily before he looked up—but this person really was way too tall, and he had to raise his head a lot in order to see who it was.

A teenager he didn't know was looking down at him, eyelids lowered, with an indifferent expression in his eyes.

This kind of assessing gaze truly couldn't be interpreted as friendly in a thirteen-year-old child's mind.

But the teenager was too handsome, and Jian Rong stared at him blankly for a while before he finally copied the internet cafe boss and scowled, fiercely asking a '*what do you want*.'

The teenager didn't say anything. He only fished out an admission ticket from his pocket and handed it to Jian Rong, along with a coffee that he had just purchased.

Even though Jian Rong was young, he still understood the meaning of that gesture. As he was hesitating over whether or not to accept it, the teenager suddenly withdrew his hand, turned around, and went into the internet cafe.

Little Jian Rong: ?!

Feeling like he had been played, little Jian Rong was infuriated, but he also felt like he wasn't a match for this person. Consequently, he vented his anger out on his hair that had just been patted.

All the way up until the teenager came out again.

This time, the other person was also carrying a bottle of milk. When he saw that Jian Rong was in the middle of tousling his own hair, the teenager furrowed his eyebrows in confusion but didn't question it. Once more, he handed over the admission ticket along with the milk.

"Come watch if you want." The teenager's voice was a little deep. "If not, take it inside and sell it for some money."

A few seconds later, he added, “But you can only sell it according to the ticket price.”

In a daze, Jian Rong took the items being handed over and momentarily didn’t respond. He also forgot to thank the teenager.

“*League of Legends LSPL Finals Admission Ticket*” was written on the ticket, and it was taking place that very afternoon.

Back then, he had already been playing LoL for two years. Even though he didn’t know what the LSPL was, he could tell that this was a competition.

The teenager’s phone rang, and he glanced at the incoming call before answering it. “I’ll be back soon.”

By the time little Jian Rong collected his thoughts, the teenager had already crossed the street, only leaving behind a blurry silhouette.

Later, he entered the internet cafe holding that ticket and negotiated a price for it that was twice as expensive as the original value.

The other person cursed him for being a little scalper while simultaneously pulling out money. As the person was handing over the cash, little Jian Rong suddenly remembered the look in the teenager’s eyes when he was giving him the ticket.

Jian Rong reneged on the offer and ran away with the ticket.

Afterwards, he walked over to the competition venue. Because he was young, the staff member hesitated for quite a while before allowing him to

enter.

He waited for ten minutes before he saw that teenager walk into the competition room, holding his keyboard.

He was wearing the black sweatshirt and jeans that Jian Rong had just seen him wear earlier that morning. The teenager's lips were pressed together, and he didn't talk to anyone around him, standing amidst the crowd like a crane amidst a flock of chickens.

There was only one commentator, and with a dialect, he introduced to the audience—this is TTC's jungler, Road.

…

The car stopped, and Jian Rong abruptly snapped out of it before immediately closing his eyes.

"We're here." After parking, Lu Boyuan turned off the car's engine.

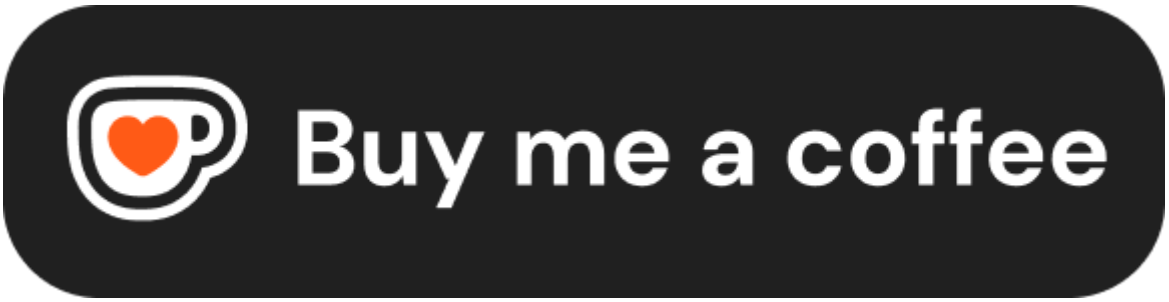
When the person next to him didn't move, Lu Boyuan stared at Jian Rong's trembling eyelashes for a few seconds before he smiled and looked away.

"Jian Rong… You're even worse at feigning sleep than you are at pretending like you can't beat your opponent."

Translation Notes

1. *Referring to it as LSPL here bc that's what it was called when LBY was playing in it back then* ^

2. *~$30,000... boi* ^



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ICDI Chapter 47: I've already received your warm greetings. I also wish you a delightful New Year, full of daily happiness.

The garage was on the basement level, and they could enter the house through the door on the right side as soon as they got out of the car.

Having heard the noise from the garage, Mama Lu was already waiting in the basement level's entryway. When the door opened, she said, "Leaving the house even though it's already so late, did something urgent happen… and this is?"

Jian Rong didn't expect for Lu Boyuan's family to still be awake at such a late hour. He was following behind Lu Boyuan, and when he heard her voice, his shoulders instantly grew tense. It had already been many years since he had last communicated or interacted with those of the older generations.

While Jian Rong was still pondering over what to say, Lu Boyuan helped answer for him.

"A teammate. The base was robbed, so I brought him back to stay with us for a few days." Lu Boyuan opened the shoe cabinet and pulled out a pair of clean slippers before dropping them in front of Jian Rong.

"Robbed?" Mama Lu hastily peeked behind him. "He wasn't hurt, right? Did you report it to the police?"

Meeting her gaze, Jian Rong straightened his back and nodded quite a few times. "I wasn't injured, and I reported it… I've troubled you."

Mama Lu saw his blue hair, and she slightly raised one elegant brow. “That’s good then. Your face is a little red, is it too chilly outside? Quickly close the door, don’t let the cold air in.”

Jian Rong obediently turned around and shut the door. There was heating in the car, so how could it possibly be cold? His face was merely red from the humiliation of having his lies exposed.

“How come you haven’t gone to bed yet?” Lu Boyuan walked further into the house.

“How could I possibly be able to sleep? Your dad isn’t asleep either, he said that he absolutely has to beat you in chess tonight.” Mama Lu looked at Jian Rong again. She opened her mouth to say something before suddenly pausing.

It took Jian Rong two seconds to react, and he hurriedly introduced himself. “Jian Rong, but you can call me however you would like.”

Mama Lu smiled. “Xiao Rong, you can sleep in the guest room on the third floor, right next to Xiao Lu. That room was just tidied up a few days ago.”

In the first floor living room, Papa Lu pinched his chin and frowned as he sat in front of the chessboard. When he heard the sound of them coming in, he said without raising his head, “Did you get cold feet and run away because you felt like you couldn’t beat me in chess?”

Lu Boyuan gave an “en.” “You can just consider it as that.”

“You—” Papa Lu abruptly looked up. His gaze stopped briefly on the teenager with dyed blue hair, who was standing next to the stairs, before traveling towards Lu Boyuan. “…hurry up and come over here!”

Knowing that he wouldn’t be able to sleep if he didn’t finish the game of chess, Lu Boyuan sighed and turned his head back. “You go up first, the room is the first on the left. Text me if anything comes up.”

Jian Rong replied with an ‘*okay*’ and politely refused Mama Lu’s kind offer to show him the way before climbing up the stairs two at a time.

The room was a bit smaller than the one at the base, but all the necessary furniture was present. There was a wardrobe, a desk, and a sofa, and everything appeared to be very clean.

After closing the door, Jian Rong put down his backpack and took off his jacket before he laid down onto the sofa, covering his eyes with the back of his hand.

He had woken up the moment the car door opened. Before he could open his eyes, Lu Boyuan’s hand had stretched into his hair, and then he had smelled the extremely faint scent of laundry detergent.

Perhaps because Lu Boyuan had been holding the steering wheel the entire time, his palm was slightly warm, and the heat had diffused into Jian Rong’s scalp before traveling through his entire body.

Restrain his emotions. Jian Rong held his breath and sensed his own heartbeat.

…had he been pulling too many all-nighters lately, causing his heart to have issues?

A long while later, he pulled his phone out of his pocket.

Halfway to Lu Boyuan's house, he had put his phone on mute. There were many messages on the screen, the majority of which were red envelope notifications from group chats.

He wasn't in many group chats. Besides TTC's internal group chat, he was only also in a streamer group chat that had 99+ messages all year round, as well as the LPL pro player group chat, which happened to be extremely lively tonight—

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu changed the group name to "Rise of Fighting Tiger in the New Year"]

[WZWZ-Mini changed the group name to "Congrats Mini for Becoming S11's Most Popular Player"]

[TTC Xiao Bai changed the group name to "Congrats TTC for Winning S11 Worlds Finals"]

Incredibly childish.

Jian Rong propped up one hand underneath his chin and was about to search through the red envelopes sent earlier when—

[MFG Kongkong changed the group name to "LPL's #1 Mid Laner Kongkong Gets Rich This Year"]

[R-ong changed the group name to “Who’s #1?”]

[MFG Kongkong changed the group name to “I’m Sorry”]

“*Hahaha*” flooded the group chat, and Jian Rong also chuckled. He scrolled upwards on the screen, freeloading off of quite a few red envelopes.

This group chat was full of the starting players for various teams, and no one was lacking money. Each energetically sent red envelope contained 200 yuan, allowing Jian Rong to pick up over 500 yuan in a short period.

After confirming that he hadn’t missed out on any, Jian Rong tossed his phone onto the sofa and pulled out some clothes from his backpack before going to shower.

Meanwhile. The game of chess quickly finished, and Papa Lu demanded another round out of discontentment.

Lu Boyuan had just shaken his head in refusal when his phone, placed next to the table, chimed again. He picked it up to check the notification and saw that the group chat had been mentioning him the entire time.

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Why isn’t Soft saying anything anymore? @R want to duo Q?]

[WZWZ-Mini: It seemed like he was grabbing the red envelopes sent earlier. I kept getting notifications of someone grabbing them [facepalm smile]]

[TTC Yuan Qian: You can only get ten to twenty yuan[1] from each one, is it really worth it]

[TTC Yuan Qian: …hold on, he also grabbed the ones that I sent half an hour ago.]

[TTC Xiao Bai: The ones I sent 1.5 hours ago were also grabbed, how long would you even have to scroll up for that? Are you a money grubber? @R-ong]

…

[TTC Xiao Bai: You there? Did you run away right after picking up the red envelopes???]

Lu Boyuan couldn't help but laugh, and he slipped his phone into his pocket.

After showering, Jian Rong laid down on the bed and checked his unread messages.

[Shiliu: These words contain my deepest thoughts. Just now, I told the clouds to deliver my wholehearted blessings to you, and I only hope that they may adorn your sweet dreams. Friend, you are someone that I care deeply about. I pray that you, my dear, will be happy every day in this new year.]

[R-ong: Did you receive the words that I told the clouds to deliver to you?]

[Shiliu: What'd you deliver]

[R-ong: If you send this kind of corny crap again I'll blacklist you]

[Shiliu: …]

His phone vibrated, and Jian Rong exited the chat to take a look.

[R: I've entrusted the wind to be my postman, so that it may bind my warm greetings into a package, stamped with my sincerity as its postmark. It crosses the atmosphere in an express delivery to its recipient: you. I wish you a delightful New Year.]

Jian Rong: "……"

Jian Rong gripped his phone and stared at it for a long time before he sat up straight to reply.

A thankful emoticon – too half-hearted.

"Thank you." – too cold, deleted.

"Thank you, have a delightful New Year as well." – it seemed to lack genuineness, deleted.

Five minutes later.

[R-ong: Thank you. I've already received your warm greetings. I also wish you a delightful New Year, full of daily happiness.]

He had just hit send when someone knocked on his room door.

Jian Rong flew off the bed and opened the door.

The light in his room wasn't on, and there was only one small dim lamp lit up in the corridor near the stairs, causing Lu Boyuan's phone to become the

brightest source of light. On the screen was the message that Jian Rong had just sent.

When Lu Boyuan lifted his head, he hadn't completely restrained his smile yet. A few seconds later, he explained, "That text was one I received earlier… when I was changing clothes, I accidentally forwarded it."

Jian Rong fell into a lengthy silence. "I was also just casually responding."

"Mn." Lu Boyuan locked his phone. "My study room is the room across from yours. There's a computer inside, no password, feel free to use it."

After saying that, he took out a bright red object from his pocket and held it in front of Jian Rong.

For once, it took Jian Rong some time to react. He looked down at Lu Boyuan's hand and didn't make a move to take it.

Lu Boyuan said, "New Year's money."

Jian Rong shook his head. "No need…"

"There's not much in it, it's just symbolic." Lu Boyuan paused before he made up some nonsense. "It's my family's tradition for everyone who hasn't come of age yet."

Before Jian Rong could collect his thoughts, Lu Boyuan suddenly reached out his hand and hooked open the pocket on the front of Jian Rong's shirt with his index finger. He then put the red envelope inside.

Seeing Jian Rong's bulging pocket, Lu Boyuan said, satisfied, "That's all. Go to sleep earlier, Happy New Year."

After closing the door, Jian Rong sat back down on his bed and opened the red envelope.

It had been a very, very long time since he last received New Year's money, and even the texture of the red envelope felt foreign.

There was a thick stack of cash inside, and just from a visual estimate, it seemed to be quite a few times greater than the total amount that he had worked arduously to snatch that entire night.

A long while later, Jian Rong resealed the red envelope and carefully placed it underneath his pillow.

—

On Lunar New Year's Day, it was snowing outside the window when Jian Rong woke up. He stared at the vast whiteness of the sky for a while before he picked up his phone to check the time.

2:17 PM.

That was the usual time he got up. Since it was the first day of the new year, he could even lay there for ten more minutes… no wait.

Jian Rong swiftly sat up and picked up his phone to confirm the time again.

Lu Boyuan was currently in the living room calling Ding-*ge* when he heard a series of footsteps come from the stairs.

Ding-*ge*: "...this won't do, I still don't feel reassured. I'll change my flight and come back tomorrow."

"Up to you."

After hanging up the call, Lu Boyuan looked at a frantic Jian Rong. "You're up?"

"Mn... I overslept." Jian Rong flattened his hair, which was messy from sleep. As he came closer, a whiff of peppermint scent leftover from washing up traveled over from his body.

"You can sleep as much as you want, there's no requirement to wake up early in my family." Lu Boyuan turned off the TV. "Hungry? I'll take you out to eat."

Jian Rong was startled before he immediately peered around himself.

"They went out." Lu Boyuan stood up. "What do you want to eat?"

Jian Rong was about to say that anything was fine, but then he abruptly recalled a skinny little yellow figure.

Seeing him remain silent, Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. "What's wrong."

Jian Rong pursed his lips. "I have something to do today, so I'll probably have to make a trip out."

"On Lunar New Year's Day?"

Jian Rong gave an “en” and rubbed his nose. “I already made a promise yesterday.”

Lu Boyuan nodded. “Is it very urgent?”

Jian Rong thought a bit. “Probably around five o’clock.”

The little orange cat always started roaming around at five PM or earlier, but never later.

“It’s 2:30 right now.” Lu Boyuan glanced at the time. “I’ll take you to eat something and then I’ll send you over. There should be enough time.”

They went to eat a western-style meal, and after coming out of the restaurant, Jian Rong connected his phone to the navigation system in Lu Boyuan’s car.

It actually only took twenty minutes to go from the restaurant to his apartment.

After arriving at the little district, it took some time to find a place to park the car.

Lu Boyuan stood next to the entrance of the building and watched the human and the cat on the stairs. He couldn’t help but laugh. “The cat… was the one you made a promise with?”

“Mn.” Jian Rong didn’t notice the amusement in Lu Boyuan’s voice as he lowered his head and poured the cat food into the dish.

Lu Boyuan leaned against the door frame. “What’s it called?”

Jian Rong shook his head. “It doesn’t have a name.”

“How come you didn’t give it one.” Lu Boyuan cast his eyes downward and asked, “Then what do you normally call it?”

Jian Rong said, “Stupid cat, little orange.”

When he was in a good mood, he called it little orange; when he was in a bad mood, he called it dumb cat.

Lu Boyuan watched the orange tabby cat chow down a huge bowl of cat food and asked, “Since you worry about it so much, why didn’t you take it in and raise it?”

Jian Rong was quiet for a few seconds. “I did take it in for a few days before. But it’s used to being a stray, so it kept calling out when it was stuck in an apartment, and the neighbors would complain. If I let it out, then I couldn’t find it. I could only wait for it to come out by itself at five PM, so I gave up.”

Lu Boyuan nodded.

It was true that there were some stray cats who didn’t enjoy living indoors.

After refilling the food and water for the cat, Jian Rong knelt in front of the little orange cat before they left and said, “I’ll come back to see you again tomorrow, don’t die.”

All the way until they got in the car, that sentence continued to float through Lu Boyuan’s mind.

Jian Rong's voice was dry, mostly emotionless, and contained a peculiar sort of comicality.

Worried that the dumb cat would follow them out, Jian Rong kept glancing in the rearview mirror after getting in the car.

Lu Boyuan only drove for ten or so seconds before he suddenly flicked on his turn signal, pulled over to the side of the road, and parked.

Jian Rong turned his head to look at him, puzzled.

Only to see Lu Boyuan pull out his phone and search up something on it before making a call.

"Hello, is this Love Pets Animal Clinic… it's like this, I want to ask your clinic to look after a stray cat. Every day at five PM, it appears at…" Lu Boyuan glanced at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong subconsciously said, "Feicui Community."

"The entrance of Building 1 in Feicui Community, or in the basement corridor of Building 2. It's an orange cat with a dash of white at the tip of its tail, I have a picture here. If you don't mind, could you send him some food and water every two days? I'll pay for the dry and wet food." Lu Boyuan's elbow was propped up against the car window, and he looked like he was discussing some business deal. "I'll compensate the clinic accordingly, but in return you have to periodically send me videos… okay, let's continue the conversation on WeChat then."

After hanging up, Lu Boyuan handed his phone to Jian Rong and started the car. “Check if a friend request came through.”

Jian Rong gripped his phone, and it took him quite a while to snap out of it.

…something like this was possible??

The animal clinic’s boss was very easy to talk to. Since the cat was a stray, the other party didn’t actually charge that high of a fee.

[Love Pets Animal Clinic: Alright, what’s the little kitty’s name?]

Jian Rong clasped the phone in his hands and thought about it briefly.

[R: Little Orange]

Once Jian Rong reached an agreement with the animal clinic, he locked the phone and placed it down. “Thank you… I can just pay the fee for taking care of it.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t argue with him. “Okay.”

After settling one of his worries, Jian Rong let out a sigh of relief before he tilted his head to look at the snowflakes outside the window.

He had never really thought outside of the box concerning this matter. If Lu Boyuan wasn’t here, Jian Rong probably would have had to make a trip over to see the cat every break. Whenever he had some down time normally, he would also always end up worrying over this old stray…

Fortunately, Lu Boyuan was here.

A ringtone interrupted Jian Rong's train of thought, and he fumbled to pull out his phone from his jacket.

Ding-*ge* said from the other side of the call, "Xiao Rong, I just told the official Weibo account to post the poll for your resuming streaming benefits. When you have time, log in and repost the poll, that way I won't have to get on your account."

Jian Rong agreed perfunctorily.

When he opened Weibo, the second post on his homepage was the poll from the official Weibo account. Jian Rong looked over the first few options.

[1. Randomly draw water friends for a civil war.

2. Play ranked with designated champions.

3. Pick a lucky water friend to take flying in duo queue.

4. Pick a water friend to send a gift to.]

As expected, these were the choices.

The same old benefit options – they were all activities that Jian Rong had done before.

He absent-mindedly scrolled downwards, only to discover that there were still more choices below.

[5. Sing a song.]

Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow.

Alright, that was still acceptable. He could borrow Xiao Bai's sound card and casually sing something.

[6. Dance.]

?

Jian Rong suddenly sat up straight.

[7. Stream while acting spoiled.]

When Jian Rong saw that there was still an option left underneath #7, an extremely awful premonition rushed straight into his head.

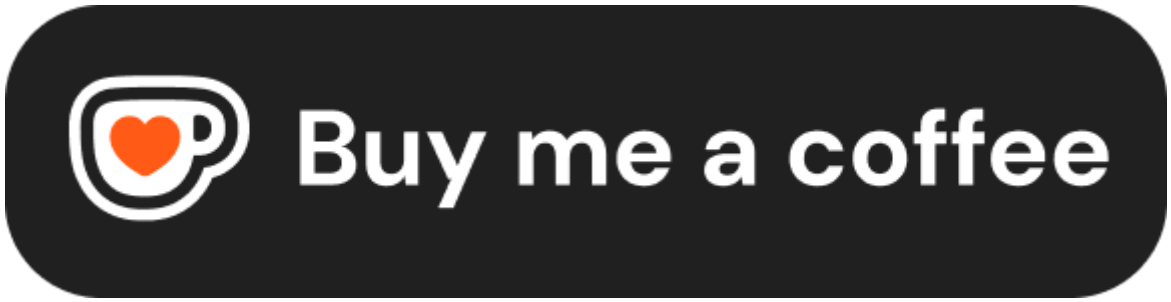
His thumb froze in midair for a very, very long time, so long that his phone screen dimmed. Only then did he press on the screen again and scroll down both carefully and slowly—

[8. Crossdress.]

Like he was venting his anger, Jian Rong threw his phone underneath his seat, and it let out a muffled, heavy thump.

Translation Notes

In case you're also confused like I was, the total amount in a red envelope is split randomly among the people in the group chat. So even if someone sends a 200 yuan envelope, the amount you get varies based on luck and the number of people in the chat ^



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ICDI Chapter 48: I've missed you all, old pals, let's chat. [hug]

Thanks to Xiwo Zhang for the Ko-fi!

When they reached a red light, Lu Boyuan stopped the car and shot a glance over. "Why aren't you picking it up."

"Let it sit there a little longer." Jian Rong stuffed both hands into his pockets, his expression extremely frosty.

Crossdress? Why didn't they just straight up make him do a strip dance?

Also, was there anything worth seeing about a man crossdressing? This could also count as a benefit?

After returning to Lu Boyuan's home, Jian Rong went to his room and immediately called Ding-*ge* to ask if there was any chance he could modify the benefit options.

"Over ten thousand people have already voted, we can't change it anymore." Ding-*ge*'s voice was cheerful. "I took a look and saw that your Weibo has gained nearly fifty thousand active fans in just one hour… some people can't even get this kind of traffic no matter how much they boot-lick."

"Is that even traffic!" Jian Rong gritted his teeth. "How did you all come up with those conditions… dancing? Acting spoiled? Crossdressing??"

Ding-*ge* shrugged. “I told you about the plan for the benefits beforehand, you’re the one who said we could do whatever. Later I even asked you to confirm it once, but you just never answered my message.”

Jian Rong thought back briefly and shut his eyes. “…I was playing ranked at the time.”

“In short, this is already a done deal, we can’t change it.” Ding-*ge* coughed and comforted him. “It’s fine. As for dancing, you can randomly wiggle around a little and call it a day. Acting spoiled is also just wagging your tongue a bit. If worst comes to worst and you really have to crossdress, it’s only a matter of changing your outfit. Many professional players and streamers have all crossdressed before, what’s the big deal?”

Knowing there was no way to save the situation, after he hung up the call, Jian Rong sullenly logged into his side account.

He could still turn this around. As long as no one voted for it, he wouldn’t have to crossdress.

Jian Rong found the post that his main account had reposted ten minutes earlier and unhesitatingly picked option #1—

[A minimum of two choices is required, please select again.]

Jian Rong expressionlessly stared at that warning for two seconds before he numbly screenshotted it and mechanically sent it to Ding-*ge*.

[Ding-*ge*: When Xiao Bai streamed on his eighteenth birthday, he had six different benefits. We took into consideration the fact that your stream

popularity is guaranteed, which is why we lowered it to two benefits.]

[R-ong: So I'm supposed to thank management?]

[Ding-*ge*: No need, it's all due to your own hard work.]

Jian Rong wanted to chuck his phone again.

He switched back to Weibo and randomly picked two of the first four options. He closed his eyes and pressed 'confirm' before he rapidly scrolled to the top of the page.

A few seconds later, Jian Rong slowly opened his eyes and scrolled back down the screen like he was checking the winners of a lottery—

[Randomly draw water friends for a civil war—1]

Jian Rong froze for a few seconds and rubbed his eyes in disbelief.

1?!

Didn't Ding-*ge* say that over ten thousand people had voted? How could there possibly be an option with only one vote—and he himself was the one who put in that one freaking vote too!!!

Jian Rong was in a daze for quite some time before he finally continued scrolling downwards.

[Play ranked with designated champions—0

Pick a lucky water friend to take flying in duo queue—1

Pick a water friend to send a gift to—11

Sing a song—1,233

Dance—4,099

Stream while acting spoiled—18,424

Crossdress—23,768]

Jian Rong laid down on his bed, closed his eyes, and chanted silently to himself.

Calm down a little, you can’t afford the contract termination fee, you really can’t afford it.

Isn’t it just crossdressing? You can just take it off after wearing it for one night, it’s not like it affects your gameplay or stream quality… my ass.

Jian Rong picked up his phone again and switched back to his main account.

It hadn’t been long since the poll was posted, everything could still be redeemed.

Very soon, Lu Boyuan found out the reason why Jian Rong had thrown his phone.

HT’s latest match recording was playing on the computer in the study room. Lu Boyuan held his phone and was silent for two seconds. “Crossdressing?”

“Mn, management did some surveys and found that crossdressing is the benefit that attracts the most viewers.” Ding-*ge* said, “I could tell from his voice that he was pretty unwilling. Since you’re with him, keep an eye on him for me, don’t let him make any trouble.”

Lu Boyuan instantly recalled the image of Xiao Bai wearing a dress on his eighteenth birthday. It only lasted for a split second before Lu Boyuan couldn’t bear to keep thinking about it and closed his eyes.

Remembering Jian Rong’s ice cube expression from when he got out of the car, Lu Boyuan chuckled. “Would he even agree?”

“Even though he’s being quite defiant, he doesn’t seem like the type who would go back on his word.” On Ding-*ge*’s end, the firecrackers were deafening. “My signal isn’t good here, we can keep talking about it once I get back tomorrow. Help me monitor him for the night… shit, he posted on Weibo!! I’m hanging up!!!”

After the call ended abruptly, Lu Boyuan lifted a hand and paused the match replay before he opened Weibo.

[TTC · Soft: Happy New Year. I’ve missed you all, old pals, let’s chat. [hug]]

Lu Boyuan couldn’t help but laugh after he saw the accompanying emoticon at the end.

The comment section was even more spectacular than the one under the original post. In the span of a few short minutes, there were already over 500 comments.

[Too late, dumbass.]

[If there's anything to say, we can talk about it in the stream. Dad is too busy creating side accounts, I have no time to deal with you.]

[Who picked #1 and #3? What fun is there in a civil war? Having a civil war with this dumbass, isn't that the same as just sending yourself over to him to be flamed for no reason whatsoever?]

[Passerby from the entertainment circle. After so many years of being in the circle, this is my first time seeing this kind of vote distribution…… as expected of the esports circle.]

[Bystander don't leave! If you pick #8 in the poll, your idol will never go bald and this year you will get rich rich rich!]

[This poll shouldn't be called "Soft's Benefit Options," it should be called "Settling Old and New Grudges Together," "What a Coincidence Do You Hate Soft Too," "If You Have a Grudge Against Him Please Come Over and Vote," or "If You're a New Dad Then Create Ten Side Accounts."]

[@TTC Esports Club the poll is wrong, the options should be "School Uniform," "Maid Outfit," or "Lolita Dress."]

[Everyone, can you vote for dance? This dumbass has kicked seven of my side accounts out of his stream before, now I have to make him kick his legs seventy times in front of me.]

[What's the fun in seeing a sack of skinny bones dance? Are you not afraid that he'll mess with you and hit you with some radio calisthenics?]

[Vote for acting spoiled ah is this even worth thinking about???]

After posting on Weibo, Jian Rong got up and poured himself a cup of water while continuously drafting his responses in his mind. He wanted to move them with emotion and enlighten them with logic, so that those dumbasses… those water friends would recast their votes.

When he got back and read through the comments, which numbered over a thousand, not a single one was using human speech.

… the situation was extremely grim.

Jian Rong gripped his water cup and contemplated for a long time before he heroically sent out a big red envelope on Weibo.

[You crazy? Can't take it? Now you're bribing?]

[I'll give you a red envelope, one that's a hundred times bigger than yours, if you crossdress + dance + act spoiled, how about it? Mommy really can't choose between dancing and acting spoiled, so if this is OK, I'll transfer the money straight to your Weibo?]

[888 yuan, 100 envelopes, do you think I'm a beggar?]

[Didn't manage to grab any. It made *laozi* so mad that I went and bought two more side accounts to vote with.]

What the fuck.

Jian Rong clicked on the reply button quite a few times, wanting to curse at them, but he forcefully restrained himself every time he typed out a

sentence.

After that happened several times, he was staring at the last comment when a light bulb suddenly flashed in his head. As if he was clutching at his last hope, he called Shiliu.

He successfully got the contact details of the person that he wanted to find from Shiliu. Jian Rong instantly added them as a friend and wrote "*extremely urgent*" in the verification message section, complete with a long string of exclamation marks following after.

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: I've accepted your friend request. Now let's chat!]

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: Hello, how can I help you?]

[R-ong: Spamming votes. A Weibo poll, can you mass vote?]

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: No problem. How many votes do you require?]

[R-ong: Let's start with 200,000 votes.]

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: ?]

[R-ong: What's with the question mark? Can you do it or not?]

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: It's possible, yes, just relatively troublesome. Why do you need so many

votes? I've never seen a poll where one option has over 200,000 votes.]

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: Or would this possibly work? Send us the link to the poll, we can help you control the poll outcome and guarantee that the option you require gets number one.]

That was fine too.

Jian Rong let out a sigh of relief and sent the link over.

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: ?]

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: We can't fulfill your[1] request]

[R-ong: Why?]

After having wasted another ten minutes, Jian Rong was a little irritated. He had just typed out "*if you can't even accept this kind of request what's the point of you being a water army*," when his phone vibrated—

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: What do you think? Little dumbass, whose bad example did you follow? Who taught you how to buy numbers? Behave with integrity and work steadfastly, you don't even understand such a simple concept? What you're doing is fraud, it's cheating, do you know that? Now you've ended up trying to buy numbers from your dad?]

Jian Rong: "……"

What kind of fucking bullshit was this.

[R-ong: You're just a crappy water army company and you're here trying to lecture me?]

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: I'm helping other people spam, it's not like I'm spamming for my own sake. I used my own accounts to vote for you, OK?]

[Please Contact For Buying Fans/Spamming Likes+Comments/Hot Search: I've screenshotted this, if there are any issues with the poll result in the future, Dad will definitely report you hah. You should just take it easy. If you have the energy to find a water army, you'd be better off using it to pick out a dress.]

Seeing that "*Typing*…" was still flashing on the screen, Jian Rong suppressed the urge to voice call the other person and hurl abuse at them. He then blacklisted the water army account.

Yet another dead end.

Jian Rong could no longer think of any other ways to make a comeback, and with a deadened heart, he was about to exit out of the comment section when—

[Hahaha Doufu also came to vote, and he even shared the poll link hahahaha]

[Fighting Tiger and MFG also voted, but they didn't share the link. I just saw that they liked this poll post, but I don't know which ones they specifically voted for.]

[I took a stroll and discovered that all the pro players Soft shaded before have joined the battlefield. Is this an example of the friendship between LPL's pro players? I'm touched.]

[When disaster struck for Soft, likes came from all sides [rose]]

Jian Rong's temper was already gone.

He calmly created a side account in order to respond to one of the fans—[Hii, could I ask which pro players liked the post? Wanna eat melon seeds~]

Right away, the fan enthusiastically sent over a list of names.

Jian Rong screenshotted it, saved the picture, and stored it in his notes. He named it: "Blood feud, assassination list."

After all that, he shared the link to the poll inside the internal team group chat.

[R-ong: Vote dance for me, thanks]

There was nothing he could do about crossdressing anymore. It was only wearing some clothes, it wasn't completely unacceptable.

As for acting spoiled… Jian Rong, who usually had to mute the other person whenever he heard a voice that was even a tiny bit coy in order to concentrate on the game, truly didn't know how to do it.

[P-Baby's Little Support: Why? Acting spoiled is easier than dancing ah.]

[R-ong: Don't know how to do that crap.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Then you know how to dance??]

[R-ong: Can't you just twist your hips and neck?]

[P-Baby's Little Support: …… don't, bro, I really don't want to have someone suddenly send a hilarious meme gif of you over when I'm in the middle of a conversation with them.]

[Ding-*ge*: I also recommend that you pick acting spoiled, it's just a matter of talking a bit.]

[R-ong: I already said that I don't know how.]

Xiao Bai sent over a voice message.

Even though Jian Rong had prepared himself mentally before clicking on the voice message, he was still thunderstruck.

"*Gege* is so troublesome~ aiyo, don't use dirty words anymore! *Gege* thank you for the gift, *mwah*…"

Goosebumps rose all over Jian Rong's body, and he immediately stopped playing it.

[R-ong: Do you wanna die]

[Da Qian: Hahahaha]

[Pine: Disgusting, group owner kick him out.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Hey, I was just giving him an example.]

[Ding-*ge*: No, Jian Rong you misunderstood me. The option said "stream while acting spoiled," but it never said you had to act spoiled towards the water friends.]

[R-ong: ...what's that mean?]

[Ding-*ge*: Acting spoiled towards your teammate also counts as acting spoiled, it's a loophole.]

Teammate?

Who's my teammate.

[P-Baby's Little Support: Yeah, when the time comes you can just act spoiled towards my *ge*. You're already so familiar with each other, you can at least put on a spoiled act with him right?]

Originally, Jian Rong thought that he was already immune to everything at this point. But in that instant, his scalp went numb once again, and his heart thumped wildly.

Acting spoiled towards Lu Boyuan...

[R-ong: No way]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Why not?]

Did this even freaking need to be asked? How could a man act spoiled with a man?!

And also, what did Lu Boyuan do wrong to have to listen to a man act spoiled towards him?

[R-ong: This is something I agreed to on my own, I don't want to involve others.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: This is nothing, my *ge* won't care about this kind of thing. His ability to ignore someone is top tier. The key thing is that you have to learn how to act spoiled… how about Master Bai gives you some last minute cram classes?]

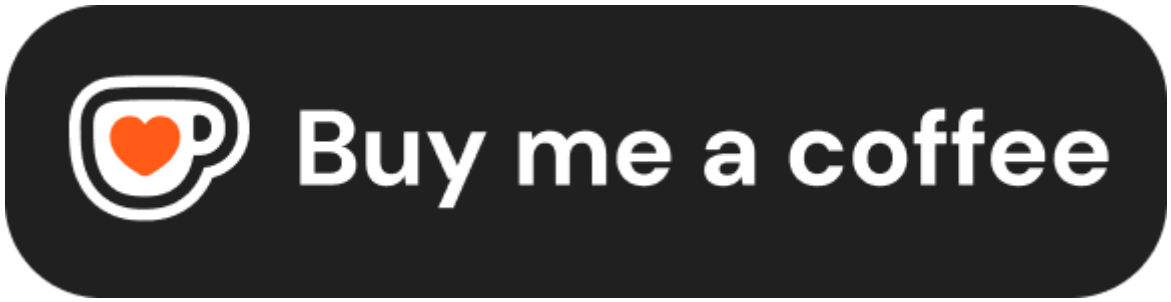
With a dark face, Jian Rong was about to type something when a profile picture containing a little teacup pig suddenly popped up—

[R: You don't need to. He knows how]

Translation Notes

1. *They've been talking to Jian Rong this whole time with the honorable you, but switched to casual you here* ^

Wei: Hnnn I actually can't breathe I can't believe JR got pitted so badly HAHA



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ICDI Chapter 49: You're not allowed to lift your skirt again.

Thank you once again to Kitty for the Ko-fi~

When Jian Rong saw that text, he stared blankly at his phone for a short moment.

Did he know how to act spoiled? How come he himself wasn't aware of that…

However, what was done couldn't be undone, and it was now irrelevant whether he knew or didn't know how. The group chat quickly switched to a different topic. Their match against Fighting Tiger was coming up soon, and even on break Ding-*ge* wasn't idle; he told them about a few small habits that Fighting Tiger's members had during competitive matches, as well as what to pay attention to during the pick/ban phase.

After the group chat calmed down again, Jian Rong slipped his phone into his pocket and stood up, intending to go to the study room and play ranked.

But when he opened his door, he discovered that the door to the study room was also wide open. Lu Boyuan was leaning back in the gaming chair, his posture relaxed as he watched a match replay.

When he heard a noise, Lu Boyuan looked over and called out to the person who was about to silently return to his room. "Want to game?"

“Mn.” Jian Rong paused. “Well, it’s not like I really want to, I’m just a bit bored.”

Lu Boyuan exited the video before he got up and freed the space in front of the computer. “It’s fine, I’ll watch you play.”

There was only one computer in Lu Boyuan’s study, but there were two chairs. One was for using the computer, and the other was for reading.

A photo of the little teacup pig rolling around on grass was placed on the desk. Only then did Jian Rong think of asking, “How come… I haven’t seen the pig?”

“When you arrived, it was asleep. Right now, they’re taking it out for a walk.”

Jian Rong was startled. “Pigs also have to be walked?”

Lu Boyuan laughed. “It’s fine if you don’t walk them… but my dad likes to mess around. Want to see it?”

Jian Rong said honestly, “Yes.”

Lu Boyuan hummed. “Once they’re back, I’ll sneak it up for you to play with.”

Sneak it up… for him to play with.

Jian Rong looked at Lu Boyuan quietly for a few seconds before he abruptly whipped his head around and quickly answered, “Okay.”

After he sat down, Jian Rong logged into his WeChat out of habit before he remembered that he was currently using Lu Boyuan's computer.

He was about to close the social media interface when Ding-*ge* sent a message over.

Jian Rong clicked on it, completely unguarded. When he saw the photos of the dresses that the other person had sent over, he froze for quite a few seconds.

[Ding-*ge*: You'll be resuming streaming soon in a few days, so we have to quickly arrange these things. See if there's anything among these photos that you can accept, if not I'll ask the stylist to keep searching.]

For the most part, the clothes that Ding-*ge* sent over were very modest. The majority were dresses, and the most risque one was a black and white maid outfit, but that was just because the chest area was quite revealing, which wasn't an issue for a guy at all.

Lu Boyuan saw the outfits from behind Jian Rong, and he could sense Jian Rong's stiffness. He asked, "Don't want to wear it?"

Jian Rong snapped out of it and closed the pictures. "A little bit."

"Then don't wear it." Lu Boyuan took out his phone. "I'll go talk to Ding-*ge*, it's not a big deal."

Jian Rong shook his head. After being tormented for so long, he ended up calming down. "Forget it, since I already agreed, I have to do it… and Ding-

ge also checked several times with me in advance, I was the one who didn't take it to heart."

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow in surprise. Based on how strongly Jian Rong had rejected crossdressing earlier, Lu Boyuan thought that Jian Rong would instantly jump at the opportunity to back out.

Jian Rong could probably sense Lu Boyuan's puzzlement, and after he started solo queueing, he lowered his head and ruffled his hair once. "At the beginning, when I first started dyeing my hair this color, it wasn't done willingly either. But if you want to bet, you have to accept your losses… plus it's just a matter of dyeing some hair or changing some clothes. It doesn't really affect anything. I only didn't want to wear it because I didn't want to let those dumbass water friends laugh at me, I can guess with my eyes closed how they'll mock me on that day."

Lu Boyuan: "Then now you aren't afraid of them mocking you anymore?"

Jian Rong chose his champion. "I am. So I told Ding-*ge* to arrange a few more room mods for me, when the time comes if I can't out-argue them I'll just kick them."

Lu Boyuan was briefly startled before he ducked his head and laughed.

Jian Rong had already entered a game, so he didn't know what kind of expression the person behind him was wearing. This lasted all the way until the sound of the garage door opening traveled in through the crack in the window. Lu Boyuan stood up from his chair and patted Jian Rong's head.

“When the time comes, give me one of your stream moderator positions too?”

The tips of Jian Rong’s ears immediately grew hot, but his hand movements didn’t slow down, and he beautifully solo killed the enemy mid laner. “… okay.”

“Mn.” Lu Boyuan withdrew his hand, satisfied. “You keep playing, I’ll go steal the pig.”

That night, Jian Rong clicked on the button to post on his Moments for the first time in a long while. He chose a few pictures of Little Orange from his photo album before adding on a few pictures of the little teacup pig too, preparing to dust off his Moments a little.

Right before posting, Jian Rong paused for a few seconds before he doubled back to add one more picture. The photo was of the red envelope that Lu Boyuan had given him.

After he successfully posted, Jian Rong refreshed his homepage while he was at it and discovered that Lu Boyuan had also posted on his Moments two seconds ago, which made his post sit right next to Jian Rong’s.

Besides the nine photos included in Jian Rong’s Moments post, he had also included a simple caption: [New year.]

Lu Boyuan had only posted one photo, with no caption.

The picture had been taken from the side. In the photo, Jian Rong was sitting cross-legged on the floor, with one hand propped up under his chin

while he used the other to pet Pipi's head—or, in other words, the little teacup pig's head.

Jian Rong stared blankly at that picture for a long time and only snapped out of it when Xiao Bai's comment popped up beneath Jian Rong's post.

[Xiao Bai: Fuck that scared me to death. With these two posts right next to each other, at first glance I thought that my *ge* was announcing that he was dating.]

Someone else asked a question underneath very quickly after.

[Yuan Qian replying to Xiao Bai: You're overthinking it, who could Captain announce that he's dating?]

[Xiao Bai replying to Yuan Qian: Tang Qin-*jie*?]

Jian Rong expressionlessly deleted Xiao Bai's reply.

A few seconds later, he felt like it wasn't enough, so he pulled up Xiao Bai's profile and, for the very first time, used the "Hide My Posts" function on Xiao Bai.

When Lu Boyuan woke up, he had over a hundred comment notifications from his Moments. He narrowed his eyes and read a few of them but felt too lazy to respond, so he just liked Jian Rong's post before he got out of bed.

A few short minutes later, Ding-*ge* called him.

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of washing his face. He turned off the tap and answered the phone. “I’m not awake yet.”

Ding-*ge* replied, “You’re awake. I saw you like Jian Rong’s Moments post.”

Lu Boyuan was rendered speechless. “…what is it?”

“I’m back at the base now. They’ve caught the thief and recovered everything except Xiao Bai’s laptop.” Ding-*ge* lowered his head and sorted through his luggage. “The thief didn’t have time to sell your watch yet, and it’s currently with me, so I just wanted to let you know. Oh, right, I’ll have someone go pick up Jian Rong and bring him back in a bit.”

Lu Boyuan tugged down his towel and wiped his face dry. He asked, “Today is still part of the break, why does he have to go back?”

Ding-*ge* was stumped by the question. Wasn’t Jian Rong originally going to spend the New Year at the base?

“He’s about to resume streaming, of course he has to come back ahead of time to prepare.”

Lu Boyuan’s movements paused, and he said a few seconds later, “Got it, don’t make anyone come get him. I’ll go back with him.”

He called Jian Rong out of his room to eat breakfast. After eating, they returned to their rooms to pack and get ready to go back to the base.

Jian Rong hugged his backpack as he waited at the entrance to Lu Boyuan’s room. He couldn’t help but say, “Actually, I can just take a taxi back.”

Lu Boyuan walked out of his room, pushing his suitcase, and he made up some random excuse. “They found the watch, I have to go back and inspect it.”

Jian Rong’s eyes widened. “They found it? Really?”

“Mn.” Seeing Jian Rong’s expression of pleasant surprise, Lu Boyuan burst into laughter. “It’s my watch, why are you so happy?”

This entire time, Jian Rong had felt like the base’s robbery was his fault, so naturally he heaved a sigh of relief upon hearing that the items had been found.

“No reason, I’m just happy.” Jian Rong averted his eyes and picked up Lu Boyuan’s suitcase. “Then I’ll wait for you downstairs.”

Jian Rong encountered Lu Boyuan’s parents on the first floor.

The two of them seemed to have just returned from outside. Mama Lu was slightly startled when she saw that Jian Rong was carrying her son’s luggage. “You two are going back already? This… is Xiao Lu’s suitcase, right?”

Papa Lu snorted coldly. “Making his junior carry his suitcase for him, he really knows how to put on airs. After entering that profession, he gained all these arrogant bad habits…”

Jian Rong had never really said much in front of these two parents, but now he responded extremely quickly. “I was the one who wanted to carry it, I grabbed it from him.”

Papa Lu: "…"

"He isn't arrogant either, he's very considerate towards every team member. He's never really put on any airs before, and he definitely doesn't have any of the bad habits that you[1] were referring to." After that, Jian Rong bowed slightly towards the two parents. "I've troubled you all these past two days."

Jian Rong waited in the garage with the luggage. Lu Boyuan only came out ten minutes later.

After the car started, Jian Rong had just fastened his seat belt when the person next to him suddenly asked, "What did you say to my dad?"

Jian Rong froze. "Nothing much… did he scold you?"

"No." The car pulled out of the garage, and Lu Boyuan said mildly, "He asked me what kind of bewitching potion I fed you… to make you support me so strongly."

Jian Rong hugged his backpack and was dumbfounded for a few seconds, before he went completely mute.

—

Ding-*ge* said Jian Rong had to return and get ready to resume streaming, but in reality there were just a few small tasks to get done. Most importantly, it was so Jian Rong could get used to the streaming process.

Jian Rong rejected Ding-*ge*'s offer to ask a professional to come by and provide guidance. "I'm more popular than this person that you found. From now on, if you need anything else regarding this field, you can just directly ask me. I'll charge a lower fee than him."

Ding-*ge*: "…"

Afterwards, Jian Rong routinely and easily finished setting up his sound card, webcam, and streaming interface, all right in front of Ding-*ge*'s face.

By the time Lu Boyuan returned from another checkup at the doctor, Jian Rong had already begun training.

When he returned, Ding-*ge* hastily put down his phone. "How was it? What did the doctor say? I already said that I could go with you, but you insisted otherwise…"

"It's nothing serious." Lu Boyuan sat down on the couch and looked at the black cloth bag placed to the side. "What's this?"

Ding-*ge* let out an "oh." "The skirt."

"…" Lu Boyuan kneaded his forehead. "Haven't you gone a little bit overboard with this."

"I knew you were going to say that." Ding-*ge* sighed. "It's really not as bad as what you all keep imagining, it's just wearing a skirt for a few hours, that's all. Crossdressing combined with duo queueing with you… do you know what I negotiated from StarTV based on these two factors? Starting from tomorrow afternoon, Jian Rong's livestream room will be able to stay

on StarTV's best recommendation list all the way until night. All of StarTV's marketing will follow accordingly, and the platform is even willing to split the gifts he receives tomorrow in a 20/80 ratio… who else would receive this kind of treatment, besides you? Even though I only helped him negotiate for a single day, this exposure will be enough for him to make a bountiful profit from now on.

"I felt like this would allow him to receive the greatest benefit, so I helped him fight for it. It's that simple."

Lu Boyuan silently listened to Ding-*ge* finish speaking. "You're not worried that he'll be unwilling?"

"That won't happen." Ding-*ge* first denied it before he joked, "If he truly is unwilling… then I'll make you help out, he really listens to you."

Lu Boyuan stood up and headed upstairs, tossing behind a: "You're thinking too much. If he isn't willing, I wouldn't make him stream."

Jian Rong resumed streaming on the fourth day after Lunar New Year.

When Lu Boyuan woke up, the team group chat was already bursting with energy. Xiao Bai was counting down in the group chat.

[P-Baby's Little Support: There's only one minute remaining!]

[P-Baby's Little Support: The last 30 seconds! I can't restrain my screenshot key anymore!]

[Da Qian: You should restrain yourself a bit, you'll be going back to the base tonight, not afraid that Xiao Rong will beat you to death?]

[P-Baby's Little Support withdrew a message.]

Lu Boyuan exited the group chat and, still in the position that he had been in when he woke up, he pulled up Jian Rong's livestream.

Jian Rong hadn't started streaming yet, but the barrage was already covering the entire screen.

[It's been so long since I last came to the little dumbass' livestream, reminiscing TAT]

[I didn't even camp out this punctually when I was waiting to check my freaking college entrance exam scores.]

[Ahhh dumbass gkdgkd[2], my wife is about to enter the delivery room!]

[I started a ranked game, but my teammates were too trash and the game didn't end even after 40 minutes. In order to watch your stream, I left the game, but in the end you're fucking late on the day you're set to resume streaming???]

[Above, I was your teammate, I also left.]

[Hasn't even started streaming yet, but the stream popularity has already reached #3…?]

[Son, face.]

[I took a look at the viewer list… currently there are already 11 LPL pro players in this livestream room…….. I didn't see it wrong, did I?]

[13 now, they don't freaking stream themselves, but they get here faster than anyone else in order to watch the show!]

[Holy shit holy shit holy shit, God Lu is here!!! A few months later, God Lu has returned to my son's livestream room once again!!!]

Seeing that the stream still wasn't beginning, Lu Boyuan was about to get up and wash when the screen suddenly flashed and started to reveal an image—

The person in the video was wearing a pink and white sailor outfit, and a pink bow was tied at the collar area, revealing a slender and fair-skinned neck above it. Since his head was raised, his slightly protruding Adam's apple was also visible.

He was wearing a wig, the blue ponytail draped over his chest. On top of his head, there was also a… pair of pink bunny ears.

Jian Rong had put on makeup, and his cheeks had purposefully been colored very red. Putting on the eyeliner had forced out a few reflexive tears from him, so the depths of his eyes were currently glistening.

It seemed like he couldn't read the barrage clearly. He narrowed his eyes and scooted forward a little, causing his shirt collar to fall forward lightly, his pale collarbones faintly discernible.

The barrage paused for two seconds, before it immediately rushed forward like a flood breaching a dam.

When Jian Rong was concentratedly looking at something, his mouth tended to open a bit out of habit. A few seconds later, his pink, lip-balm coated lips opened and closed. “Spam the barrage slower, your dad can’t read it clearly.”

[……]

[*Laozi* was already ready to jack off, but the moment he opened his mouth I wilted]

[Dumbass darling is so pretty dumbass darling is so pretty]

[Dumbass daughter tug at your collar!!]

[Dumbass daughter happy 18th birthday!!!]

[Can those damn YY[3] losers get lost? Several thousand of his dads are here, do you still fucking dare to be so lecherous?]

[If I say you’re girly now, will you admit it??]

[I remember that TTC doesn’t accept female members, were you actually a girl pretending to be a guy earlier in order to join TTC?]

[Darling you’re so cute, Mommy gives you a kiss -3-]

[Mom fans gradually become degenerates.]

“Thank you Xiao Bai, Qian-*ge*, Hezi, Pine, and Kongkong for your Sea of Stars. Thank you ‘Soft World’s #1 Sissy’ for your Sea of Stars. Thank you ‘Soft Damn Crossdresser’ for your Sea of Stars. Thank you ‘Darling Daughter I Love You’ for your two Sea of Stars…”

After reciting the last name, Jian Rong frowned. “Darling? You all are so disgusting, don’t call me that, you’re going to make my foot hair bristle.”

[You have foot hair even though you look like that??]

“Your dad has more foot hair than you do hair.” Right after Jian Rong said that, he directly hiked up his right leg and put it on the chair before he grabbed the webcam and started to direct it towards his leg.

[????]

[Ah what? What kind of segment is this…?]

[Shit nobody really wants to see your foot hair!!!]

[Even if you wore ten fucking skirts you’d still be pure dumbass…]

[Skirt!! Pull up your skirt a little!!!]

[Oh my this skirt is actually a genuine version. Dumbass son hasn’t disappointed Mom, he knows the business.]

[Shocked, will this not be locked??]

The camera shook, and the white stockings that Jian Rong was wearing had just entered the shot when the viewers heard the sound of a door opening.

Jian Rong was about to prove that he was an authentic man when someone suddenly snatched away the webcam. He froze and subconsciously looked up.

Lu Boyuan wore a short-sleeved shirt and gray trousers. His hair was a bit messy since he just woke up and hadn't styled it.

It was the appearance of someone who had just gotten out of bed and hadn't had time to wash up yet.

Lu Boyuan held the webcam in his hand and crooked his finger before he tapped it against the knee of the leg that Jian Rong had hiked up.

"Sit properly." His voice was slightly hoarse.

Jian Rong snapped out of it and instantly put his leg down. "You're up?"

Lu Boyuan hadn't even washed his face yet. He placed the webcam back on top of the monitor before he looked down at Jian Rong. "Want your livestream room to be locked?"

Jian Rong was startled, though he recovered very swiftly. "No, I'm wearing pants underneath, look."

After Jian Rong said that, he lifted up his skirt and showed Lu Boyuan that pair of little shorts.

Lu Boyuan: "."

During the past few months, Jian Rong had become a little plumper from being fed, and he no longer looked like a sack of bones. His thighs were

clean and pale, and there were two tiny moles on them.

[????]

[Can't see can't see can't see, let me see what the shorts look like!]

[Damn my husband's just-woke-up appearance is so handsome!]

[rwkk[4]! rwkk! God Lu angle the webcam downwards a bit ahhh—]

[God Lu's voice is so sexy ahhh wsl[5]]

[Aren't you supposed to be duo Q'ing with God Lu?? When are you guys starting ah?]

Lu Boyuan reached out and tugged down Jian Rong's skirt. The rough pads of his fingers stroked very lightly across Jian Rong's thighs.

Originally, Jian Rong hadn't thought much of it, but after that touch, he immediately sat properly and stopped moving around.

"Let me go wash my face, and then I'll come back to queue with you." Lu Boyuan said mildly, "You're not allowed to lift your skirt again."

Translation Notes

1. *Jian Rong uses the courteous you here* ^
2. *Pinyin abbreviation for 搞快点 (gao kuai dian) – basically just like hurry up, hurry up* ^
3. *Probably seen this slang a lot in Chinese bl novels, but it refers to having sexual fantasies. Aka that nasty guy earlier who was being*

gross over Jian Rong ^

4. *Rwkk = 让我看看 (rang wo kan kan) = let me see* ^
5. *Wsl = 我死了 (wo si le) = I'm dead* ^

Yan: A lotta Chinese acronym slang in this chapter! I thought about translating it into English for immersion but eh treat it as an opportunity to learn more Chinese slang 😉 a lot of them are quite frequently used, especially like gkd and awsl.

Wei: JR you're such an unintentional tease HAHA

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 50: Didn't I already act spoiled? I'm even wearing his clothes…

Half a minute after Lu Boyuan walked out of the practice room, Jian Rong was still staring down at his skirt.

This skirt… wasn't that bad, right?

At first, Jian Rong had still been somewhat resistant, all the way up until Ding-*ge* came back and showed him the clothes—in Jian Rong's eyes, this so-called "sailor outfit" just consisted of a normal short-sleeved white shirt and a skirt that almost reached his knees. It was even longer than the shorts that he wore at home in the summer.

He had felt uncomfortable when putting on the makeup, but only because he was ticklish. There had been a few moments where he wanted to turn his face away and leave while they were drawing his eyeliner.

A few seconds later, Jian Rong tugged up the skirt hem and glanced at the place where Lu Boyuan's fingertips had just slid across.

The area kept prickling periodically, making him think that the skin had broken. In reality, there wasn't even a trace of red left behind.

Although the webcam only showed his upper body, his hand movement was enough for other people to know what he was doing.

[Damn are you a pervert! Why do you keep looking underneath your skirt!!]

Jian Rong straightened out the hem of the skirt and sat properly again. “How can you be a pervert if you’re looking at yourself? Do you not shower normally?”

[???]

[Let me see too, Mom’s already tired of saying that.]

[Is there anything that us dads, who send you gifts, can’t see??]

[God Lu, how come you won’t stream but you’re willing to duo Q with Soft instead? In any case you’ll still be playing the game, can’t you just stream too!]

[Came in through the homepage recommendations… how come there are so many people watching this female streamer? Her chest is so flat ah, but the collarbones are quite nice. Can you tug your collar down a bit more?]

[Tug your mom, dumbass vulgar man scram.]

[Stop wasting time, dumbass darling hurry up and act spoiled.]

[Yeah, the agreement was to act spoiled, but the moment you come up you fucking call yourself Dad?]

[Is this the legendary dad-type loli?]

Jian Rong was in the habit of sitting cross-legged when chatting with water friends. He had just brought up one leg when he remembered what Lu Boyuan said… and he silently put it down again. “Acting spoiled? Who said I was going to act spoiled with you all.”

[Shit, wretched daughter is going back on her words!]

[Where to file a report? TTC management, can you come out and take care of things?!]

[The Soft dad above, did you not see the Weibo marketing post he sent out today? This dumbass is indeed not going to act spoiled with us :)]

[Who looks at that crap, after I opened a side account and voted that was the end of it.]

Never mind the water friends, not even Jian Rong himself had seen those marketing posts. Right after he woke up, he had been snatched away to put on makeup and try on the clothes. Ding-*ge* had been the one to send out the marketing posts on Weibo using Jian Rong's phone.

Jian Rong chewed on his milk straw and easily pulled up the webpage to check it out—

[TTC · Soft: Hello everyone, I'm TTC's mid laner Soft [cute]! Thank you for everyone's passionate voting these past two days, I will be streaming while crossdressing on StarTV at 3 PM on February 15th~ @TTC · Road Captain, are you ready to receive my spoiled act TAT. Stream link: …]

Jian Rong nearly spat out his mouthful of milk.

[Hahahahahaha goddamn]

[??? You got a problem? Road is already giving you a lot of face by willingly playing along with the marketing and duo Q'ing with you, OK? Not being

satisfied with that and wanting more is a little bit too much, isn't it?]

[I feel like what God Lu's fan said is right, dumbass son don't stick to God Lu, you're really making Dad lose a lot of face by acting like this hah]

[Damn, after raising a daughter for so long, now she's going to act spoiled with someone else? But I'm actually a bit excited to see what will happen…]

Jian Rong ignored them and directly called Ding-*ge*. Ding-*ge* was just in the living room clutching his laptop and watching the stream, so he answered extremely quickly.

Jian Rong grinded his teeth. "The Weibo you posted… why is it like that?!"

Ding-*ge* cleared his throat. "Originally I wanted to write it while copying your usual style, but your style isn't very easy to imitate… so I gave up. It's fine, your fans will know that someone else posted that Weibo for you at first glance."

Because he was already wearing headphones, Jian Rong had the phone call on speaker.

[Let me clarify something, he doesn't have fans, everyone here is his dad. Those who agree, say it's true.]

[It's true.]

[It's true.]

[Road fans, don't be impatient, everything is first come first served. In a bit when he acts spoiled with God Lu, you all can curse him out first, alright?]

Ding-*ge* added: “Also, about streaming, I already briefed Xiao Lu. He agreed to cooperate with you, so just stream however you’d like, no pressure.”

“…got it.”

After hanging up the phone, Jian Rong subconsciously went to clutch at his hair, but he ended up touching the fluffy rabbit ears on his head instead.

“…” He withdrew his hand, opened the game, and stiffly switched the topic. “Thank you ‘Dumbass 215 Happy Birthday’ for your Sea of Stars, thank you ‘TTC Xiao Bai (Can You Carry Me In Duo Q)’ for your Sea of Stars, I can’t. Thank you ‘TTC Hezi’ for your gift, stop sending them, your signing bonus is how little again? Thank you ‘YY Doufu’… I take it back, I’m not thanking that one.”

[TTC · Xiao Bai (Can You Carry Me In Duo Q): Oh :(]

[TTC · Hezi: …]

[YY-Doufu: ?]

[Hahahaha where’s that friendship between teammates? The friendship between teams??]

It took Jian Rong five minutes just to express all his thanks for the gifts. He took a sip of water to recuperate a little. “The friendship between teammates is unstable, the friendship between teams is just to trick you all. Why did Doufu send me a gift? How should I know? It’s not like I kicked him out of the stream, ask him yourself.”

After getting his revenge for being purposefully ignored last time in Doufu's stream, Jian Rong pulled up a certain famous video streaming website.

[What? Loafing on the job? Reported.]

Jian Rong ignored the barrage's threat to report him and typed into the search bar: [LPL crossdressing].

Instantly, countless search results popped up on the screen.

Crossdressing while streaming wasn't all that rare; if not half, then at least a third of all professional players had worn skirts before.

Instantly, innumerable "?" flew past the barrage, including a few agitated "fuck offs" from some implicated crossdressing parties.

The room mods didn't dare to block professional players, so Jian Rong bestowed a grand five minute speaking ban banquet on those who used profanity. After that, he finally leisurely clicked on the videos one by one. "I'm not loafing on the job. Don't you want to see me act spoiled? Dad doesn't know how, so I have no choice but to learn from some other people's experiences… wait a minute, let me see who shared my streaming poll."

Xiao Bai was first on the list.

Right after the video started, Xiao Bai continuously batted his eyes at the camera, wearing a black lace spaghetti strap dress. He pitched his voice

high and said, “You’ll send a Little Star if I call you *gege*? *Gege~ gege~* this one wants a Little Star~~”

This was Jian Rong’s first time seeing this kind of scene, and he only snapped out of it after Pine smashed him two Sea of Stars.

“My apologies, didn’t mean to offend.” Jian Rong closed the video. “Don’t report me, the person in this video has a livestream room, go and report him there.”

Kongkong was next.

Kongkong was also wearing a sailor outfit, but he had on cat ears instead. At the start of the video, he held up his hand next to his face and meowed. While playing the game, he constantly cheered on and encouraged his teammates, sending messages like “*gege plays so well,” “gege don’t be discouraged,” “wah gege gave me the blue buff~”* at the drop of a hat.

“…our outfits clashed. This one’s okay, at least he’s only typing, not as disgusting as Xiao Bai.” Jian Rong said indifferently, “Stop dreaming, there’s no way I can make my voice sound like that.”

Doufu was last.

Doufu was wearing a LeBlanc cosplay that revealed quite a bit of his chest, and he had even stuffed it with fake breasts. He propped his chin up on his hand and blinked at the camera while licking his lips, causing his female fans to scream and howl out of excitement in the comments.

“Can this even be streamed?” Jian Rong frowned. “I missed the best timing, but can I still report him now.”

By the time the practice room door was pushed open, Jian Rong was in the middle of watching WZWZ’s Mini dance while wearing a crop top. Perhaps being a straight guy made Mini even more unrestrained, as he wildly shook his hips.

Hearing the door open, Jian Rong quivered and sat up straight before exiting the webpage at the speed of light, leaving only the streaming window and LoL client behind on the desktop screen.

[Me when I’m caught slacking off at school.]

[Me when someone suddenly enters the room while I’m in the middle of watching porn.]

Jian Rong first caught a whiff of the refreshing scent of peppermint toothpaste before a grayish-green pure cotton jacket with a turned-down collar appeared on his legs.

Lu Boyuan had changed into long sleeves, and he was holding coffee and bread in his hands. “Put it on.”

A bunch of question marks instantaneously floated across the barrage, followed by a screen full of “*shameless*” and *“don’t do it*”.

Lu Boyuan swept a look over the barrage. “They didn’t say he couldn’t wear a jacket, did they.”

[Why! There's heating at the base! Why wear a jacket!!]

It was true, there was heating. But Jian Rong had always had a bad habit when training: in order to maintain a clear-headed state, the window in front of his computer was open half the time every day. Sometimes when Xiao Bai felt too cold from the wind, he would make Jian Rong close it for a while. Now that Xiao Bai wasn't here at the base, Jian Rong could leave it open for the entire day.

Lu Boyuan: "Are you going to wear it?"

Jian Rong wore the jacket.

Lu Boyuan often wore that jacket inside the base. Jian Rong's build was too different from his, so the jacket appeared quite large on him, and the sleeves especially were a whole section too long. Jian Rong had to drag them up a bit for them to fit.

[No more acting spoiled, and the crossdressing is half-covered too, are you sure this is a water friend benefit? Also… God Lu, could you share the link for the jacket?]

[Did you see the logo on the jacket? You can find it on the official website, don't remember the price anymore but in any case it's not lower than five digits.]

[That was my ignorance.]

[Scream! Son you're so tiny!!]

[How come I feel like – it's become even more exciting after he put on the jacket.]

[…looks a little like a boyfriend jacket (Lu fans don't hit me I'll punish myself with three slaps)]

[If I may be so bold, matched with that rosy blush, it gives off a "right after crossdressing play God Lu didn't give the little dumbass any time to rest before forcing him to wear his jacket and stream"—that kind of deja vu feeling.]

[Above, what are you saying? *Laozi* didn't understand.]

Jian Rong also didn't understand.

But after a quick glance over, he felt like the comment didn't contain anything good, so he twitched his finger and blocked that person.

Lu Boyuan logged into the game. "Invite me."

Jian Rong turned his head and saw the still unopened package of bread on Lu Boyuan's desk. "…not eating breakfast?"

"I'll eat while I play, it won't affect anything." Lu Boyuan opened the streaming platform and hung his own account in Jian Rong's livestream room.

Jian Rong hesitated briefly and was about to suggest that Lu Boyuan eat first while Jian Rong solo queued a game when Lu Boyuan's party invite popped up.

Jian Rong instantly clicked accept. After selecting the roles that he wanted to play, he gave Lu Boyuan an admin position in his livestream room as they had previously agreed upon.

[You're really such a boot-licker, son. God Lu didn't even give you an admin position.]

[TTC · Xiao Bai (Mid-Blackening): I also want an admin position~]

Jian Rong didn't even consider it. "Not for you."

[TTC · Xiao Bai (Mid-Blackening): My *ge* didn't send a single gift today but still gets an admin position, I've already sent ten Sea of Stars! Even just according to the rules, you should be giving a position to me!!]

Jian Rong nodded. "Send ten more and I'll give it to you."

[TTC · Xiao Bai (Blackened): Gu Beirong[1], you're so ruthless.]

Gu Beirong stopped paying attention to him.

They matched into a game very soon.

Lu Boyuan didn't like to talk while eating. After he consumed two pieces of bread to fill his stomach, he glanced at the champions that the other team had banned.

Lee Sin, Nidalee, Graves, LeBlanc, Zed.

Those were all champions that he and Jian Rong frequently used.

Jian Rong also realized that. He was about to say something when he saw that the barrage was full of resentment.

[Where's the spoiled act that we were promised? You're really going to back out??]

[So you mean that Dad created those 20+ side accounts for nothing?]

[All bark and no bite, this time Dad is really looking down on you.]

"I…" Jian Rong wasn't using the in-game voice chat, so he lowered his voice and said angrily, "Didn't I already act spoiled? I'm even wearing his clothes…"

[???]

[Say that one more time? What counted as acting spoiled?]

[It turns out that you played those dozen or so videos earlier just for *laozi* to watch? But you didn't learn a damn thing from them?]

[No way no way, it can't be that there are really people who can't tell he's just pretending he doesn't know how to do it in order to get out of doing the benefits?]

Jian Rong wanted to crush the person who sent that last shady message.

Lu Boyuan wasn't looking at the stream interface as he retied the bag of bread. "They…"

"…*gege*."

Jian Rong suddenly spoke and interrupted him, his voice so quiet that it couldn't go any quieter. It sounded as if he had called that out while suppressing some anger, and he spoke extremely quickly.

His mouse suddenly paused in the middle of choosing his champion, and Lu Boyuan was silent for a few seconds. "Mn."

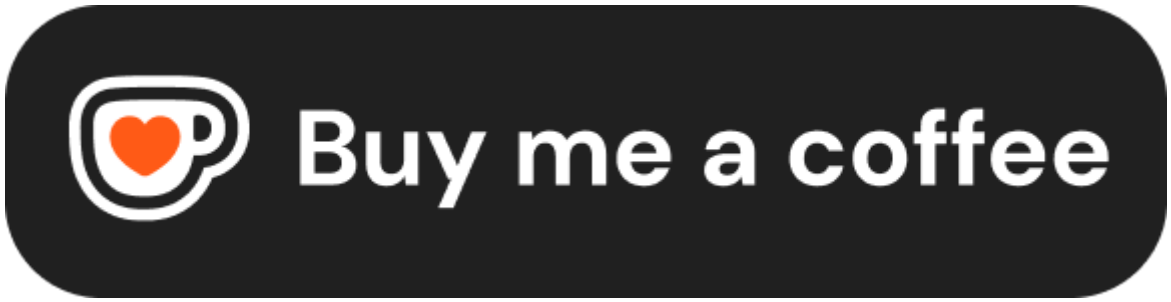
"We probably crashed cars with some acquaintances, the other side banned all of our champions…" Jian Rong covered his face, his ears bright red, and he didn't dare to turn his head around. After a long, long time passed, he finally added the ending syllable that those dumbass water friends insisted he include: "*Ne~*"

The high-pitched voice that he pinched out didn't make it seem like he was acting spoiled. Instead, it sounded like he was about to be hanged.

Translation Notes

1. *So this is some meme about a webnovel in which the female lead is forced to abort her baby and she says that line above (but about Gu Beicheng, the male lead, here the author changes "cheng" to "rong"). It became popular bc of people roasting the line for being super Mary Sue.* ^

Wei: Jiayou Jian Rong you can do it HAHA



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ICDI Chapter 51: You're eighteen today, you can have whatever you want.

Lu Boyuan finally randomly chose a champion when the champion selection countdown was about to end. His voice was the same as usual. "Should be the case."

"…" Jian Rong was still covering his face, but he cracked open his fingers a bit so that he could see out.

The barrage was full of "*hahaha*," to the point that he couldn't even recognize the word anymore.

Normally, Jian Rong would never even call anyone "*ge*," let alone "*gege*." During those few seconds when Lu Boyuan went silent, Jian Rong had wished fervently that he could crawl into the crack on the corner of the tile underneath Xiao Bai's desk.

Jian Rong gloomily knocked back half a cup of cold water before he focused back on the game.

When Jian Rong saw Lu Boyuan's champion, he was startled. "You're playing Amumu?"

Amumu was the forgotten of the forgotten. Never mind how he hadn't ever been used competitively before, very few people chose to play him even during normal ranked.

This treatment was fairly consistent with Amumu's image. He was a champion that was crying even while using his skills, and his signature dialogue was "I thought you'd never pick me."

Lu Boyuan couldn't say that it was because he had picked randomly when time was almost up. Without batting an eyelash, he finished adjusting Amumu's runes. "Mn, I'm practicing the new strategy that we discussed earlier."

Jian Rong: "?"

All the TTC players and coaches who were currently watching the stream: "??"

What new strategy with Amumu? What kind of freaking strategy could Amumu even have?

A few moments later, Lu Boyuan spoke again. "...forgot that you were streaming. Forget it, it doesn't matter."

He acted too well, to the point that Jian Rong thought he had actually missed something before.

[Grandpa did you hear that? Amumu is going to enter the competitive arena!!!]

[Grandpa lifted his index finger with difficulty, shook it, and said: Don't believe or spread rumors.]

[Dumbass, can you not fish in troubled waters and just say something while acting spoiled? At the very least you should keep it up until today's stream is over, right?]

[*Ai*, really, I created Weibo accounts with all of my family's phone numbers to vote in that poll, just so that it could beat the dance option. In the end… that's it? Very disappointed, the streamer I'm a fan of is actually this kind of person.]

[This kind of half-hearted act… boring.]

[What's going on with the barrage… why is it suddenly so zqsg[1]??]

[This dumbass is open to coaxing but not coercion, so it makes sense that he's pretending.]

[I've been idling in your livestream room waiting for you to resume streaming for a whole week, and what did I get for waiting? *Ai*, the water knows if a fish cries, but who will know if I cry?]

"Why didn't you just say that you've been waiting in my livestream room since Pangu created the universe?" Jian Rong smiled fakely. "Stop making trouble for no reason, okay? How do you even act spoiled during this kind of normal dialogue?"

The water friends were long since prepared. Right after he said that, countless 'acting spoiled' vocabulary instantly filled the screen.

Jian Rong gave a cursory glance over them, and then… picked out a few of the water friends who sent those more unpleasant phrases and blocked

them.

He squeezed his rabbit ears before he randomly chose Azir.

After they entered the loading screen, Jian Rong instantly snatched up his phone to send a WeChat message.

[R-ong: If you feel uncomfortable listening to it, I'll talk a little less.]

[R: Uncomfortable.]

The corners of Jian Rong's mouth went rigid, before they slowly collapsed downwards.

What kind of bullshit was he even asking… who would feel comfortable hearing a grown man act spoiled??

After quite a while, Jian Rong had only typed out an "okay." Before he could hit send, his phone vibrated again.

[R: Your voice is too low, can't hear it, speak louder.]

The sound of them entering the game dragged Jian Rong back from his daze, and he hurriedly put his phone down on the table.

Sure enough, they had crashed cars with people they knew. Fighting Tiger's mid laner and jungler were on the opposing team.

As soon as they entered the game, the other side spoke.

[[All] Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Don't worry, we don't do things like screen peeping.]

[[All] TTC · Road: 1]

“If you can’t fight him, then just wait for me.” Lu Boyuan walked over to the blue buff. “I’ll come gank after level 6.”

This game, Da Niu was playing Vel’Koz, the Eye of the Void. This champion was ranged and especially good at restraining Jian Rong’s Azir.

“Okay.” Jian Rong paused. “*Ne*, *gege*.”

Lu Boyuan was finally able to hear that “*gege*” clearly.

It wasn’t coy, and Jian Rong sounded very unnatural saying it, but for some reason it was still pleasing to hear.

After clearing the wolf camp, Lu Boyuan proceeded towards the upper half of the jungle. Simultaneously, he reached up and dragged the volume switch on his headphones up a bit.

[A little more coy! Squeeze your legs together for *laozi* and shout!!]

[Holy shit dumbass your ears are on fire!!]

“How about I squeeze your head together and shout?” In early game, Jian Rong’s champion’s only purpose was to farm. After he finished waveclearing, he took the opportunity to move his “ponytail” forward, blocking his ears. “Stop wanting a mile after getting an inch.”

Jian Rong had laned against Da Niu a few times before in practice matches. Da Niu was experienced and had a honed playing style, so he was very hard to take advantage of.

Of course, the other side wouldn't allow Jian Rong to farm so smoothly, and Da Niu relied on his champion's long attack range to pressure Jian Rong very fiercely. Jian Rong suffered a loss because of his champion, and he could only eat the minions that entered his tower in order to precariously survive.

At level 6, Lu Boyuan approached the mid lane. "I'm here."

Jian Rong was irritated from being suppressed, and he had just forced himself to fight out a wave with Da Niu. Currently, both of them only had half their health remaining.

Jian Rong immediately said, "He has his flash, it won't be easy to gank him. I can force his flash out first…"

Lu Boyuan directed, "Flash to the left to knock him back."

Jian Rong did as instructed and swiftly tossed out his flash and ult. When Da Niu was knocked over to the right side of the brush, he knew the other side's jungler had arrived. The second he saw Lu Boyuan, he used his flash and fled without the slightest bit of hesitation.

Two flash sound effects happened at the same time—Lu Boyuan had used his own flash almost at the exact same moment. After that, his predicted Q accurately hit Da Niu, followed closely by his binding ult, forcing Da Niu to stay trapped in that one spot.

Lu Boyuan's prediction of Da Niu's movement in this wave was too awesome, and after he got the kill, Jian Rong blurted out, "Beautiful!"

A few seconds later, under the urging of the barrage, Jian Rong clenched his teeth and added, "*Gege* is so great."

Jian Rong's tone of voice was very stiff, and it sounded like he was reading from a textbook; there wasn't any hint of acting spoiled whatsoever.

The water friends didn't think he sounded coy. They only thought it was hilarious, especially his each and every frightening lilt at the end of his syllables. Just speaking once was enough to make them laugh for quite some time.

Lu Boyuan: "You used your flash, so their jungler will definitely come over in a bit, be careful. If we want to win this round, we can only play late game."

Lu Boyuan was like a prophet. Right after Jian Rong left his base, Fighting Tiger's mid laner and jungler tower dove and forcefully killed him.

It was very hard to drag it out to late game. Both the top and bot lanes were letdowns, and after a few small team fights, their teammates had nearly all died on the battlefield. Oftentimes, only Lu Boyuan and Jian Rong were able to escape unscathed.

The same thing happened this wave. Their teammate was apparently bored and had nothing to do, so they entered the enemy's jungle and ended up getting ganked. By the time Jian Rong made it over, their teammate just happened to topple over.

He cooperated with Lu Boyuan to kill the enemy with difficulty before they both rapidly withdrew from the enemy's jungle.

When passing by the enemy's blue buff, Jian Rong's walking speed distinctly slowed down.

The third time he stopped walking, Lu Boyuan spoke. "What's the matter."

Jian Rong pressed down on his mouse and circled once around Amumu before he said honestly, "I want their blue buff."

There was still seventeen seconds remaining before the enemy's blue buff refreshed. Their side didn't have the advantage, and the enemy could come over at any time.

Before Lu Boyuan could say anything, Jian Rong mumbled quietly, "… they've already stolen two of my blue buffs from me."

There was a begrudging tone to his voice, which sounded pretty much the same as normal.

But for some reason, those words just inexplicably seemed…

[Damn! And you said that you didn't know how to act spoiled???]

[Mommy can't help you take that blue buff, Mommy can only smash money on you, it's Mommy's fault for being useless *wuwuwu*]

[You're so coquettish ahhhh—]

Jian Rong was stunned. "How did I act spoiled?"

[If you want the blue buff, can't you just camp out and get it yourself? When you played before didn't you always treat your teammates like

decoration? Are you not acting spoiled to Road so that he'll stay behind and help you get the buff?]

Jian Rong: "…"

The sound of a ping came from his headphones, and Jian Rong snapped out of it to see that Lu Boyuan had already walked over to the enemy's blue buff.

"Come here." Lu Boyuan's voice was warm and deep, and his tone was natural. "You're eighteen today, you can have whatever you want."

At first, Jian Rong was going to refute the water friends a bit, but when he heard that… he pressed his lips together and didn't say anything else before he turned around and silently went to steal the blue buff.

[??]

[I seem to have accidentally… discovered something?]

[How come *laozi* has this weird feeling, like I'm watching Bye and Pine stream.]

[Little dumbass, your unrequited love is over??]

Jian Rong ignored the barrage. After they won the game, he put a speaking ban on all the people who said that he had an unrequited love.

They queued all the way until evening. During that period, Lu Boyuan didn't play a weak champion again, nor was Jian Rong's blue buff stolen by someone else again.

Yet another game finished, and Jian Rong's phone suddenly buzzed with a message from the group chat.

[Ding-*ge*: @R You've gone over the set time, stop playing, rest a bit.]

Jian Rong read over that sentence twice and furrowed his eyebrows.

[R-ong: What set time?]

[R: I know, last game.]

[Ding-*ge*: Don't assume I'm unaware that you two just finished a match.]

[Ding-*ge*: Really, stop playing, I happen to have something I need to discuss with you.]

In the middle of his puzzlement, Jian Rong heard Lu Boyuan's voice travel through his headphones. "Ding-*ge*'s looking for me, play by yourself for a while?"

Jian Rong said okay.

When Lu Boyuan stood up and walked past him, Jian Rong couldn't help but turn his head around, wanting to ask him something. Abruptly, someone gently gripped the rabbit ears that he was wearing.

This was Lu Boyuan's first time touching something like this. He pinched it a few times between his fingers. "Still half an hour until the stream ends?"

Jian Rong glanced at the time. "…more or less."

Lu Boyuan nodded before he released the rabbit ears, turned around, and left the practice room.

All the way up until he entered a new game, Jian Rong's mind was still full of that "*set time*" phrase.

Professional players didn't have a concept like "set time." Typically, they practiced however long they needed to, and coaches very rarely took the initiative to tell the players to stop practicing, unless they felt like that player couldn't hang in there much longer.

After Jian Rong finally made it to the end of his stream, he let out a huge sigh of relief.

Amidst numerous comments urging him to stay, he closed the streaming platform and went downstairs. Only then did he discover that everyone else had already returned to the base, and they were currently in the living room distributing regional specialties from their hometowns.

Yuan Qian noticed him first, and he smiled. "Xiao Rong, happy birthday."

Pine was in the middle of a mobile game, and he glanced up at Jian Rong when he heard Yuan Qian speak. "Happy birthday."

Jian Rong surveyed his surroundings and didn't see Lu Boyuan or Ding-*ge*. He walked down the last of the steps and said, a little awkwardly, "Thank you."

They were all fairly unsentimental esports youths, so the money that they sent earlier that day in Jian Rong's stream could just be considered his

birthday gifts.

Right when Jian Rong walked over to the couch, Xiao Bai dragged him down onto it.

“Fuck, your shirt is also a crop top!!” Xiao Bai exclaimed.

“It’s not.” Jian Rong casually tugged at his clothes. “It’s too short, but it only shows when I’m standing straight.”

“Isn’t that what a crop top is…” Xiao Bai jerked his chin up towards Jian Rong. “Oh right, hurry up and show me your foot hair.”

Jian Rong thought that he misheard him. “What??”

“Your foot hair ah!” Xiao Bai’s face was full of curiosity. “I heard P-baby say that foot hair grows on the back of the foot. I don’t have any, and P-baby won’t show me his, so quick, let me broaden my horizons a bit.”

Jian Rong’s “*are you crazy*” was already in his mouth.

“But you don’t even seem to have much leg hair.” Xiao Bai stared at Jian Rong’s legs and frowned suspiciously. “Those look like a girl’s legs. Do you really have foot hair?”

When Lu Boyuan came downstairs, he was greeted by the sight of Jian Rong with one leg hiked up on the edge of the coffee table, his foot bare. The white stocking had been tossed to the side on the carpet, and Jian Rong was doing his best to search for something on the back of his foot.

“Here, you see it?” Jian Rong said, pointing at something on his foot.

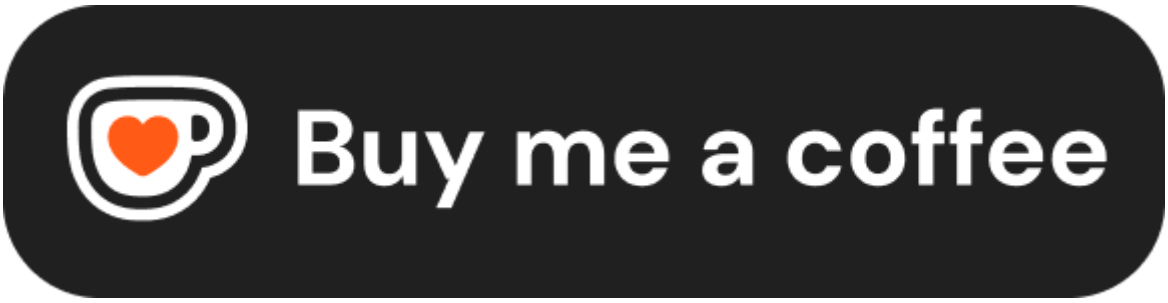
“Where?” Xiao Bai frowned and had to strain himself in order to see it clearly. “Ah? It’s just… one freaking hair??”

Jian Rong, who had just become eighteen years of age and was now an adult, scoffed coldly. “So what if it’s just one hair? You don’t even have any.”

Translation Notes

1. *Zqsg = 真情实感 (zhen qing shi gan) = displaying your true emotions* ^

Yan: Ok but Jian Rong’s sajiao is actually super cute lol he babieeee~ hehe the next chapter is one of my favorites!!!



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ICDI Chapter 52: You're all grown up now.

After his exhibition, Jian Rong was pondering how to ask Xiao Bai about the "set time" when, out of the corner of his eyes, he glimpsed a slender hand picking up the stocking that he had thrown offhandedly onto the ground.

Lu Boyuan had just finished talking with Ding-*ge*, and his sleeves were casually rolled up to his elbows. His hand, which usually gripped a black mouse, was currently holding a singular white stocking with pink trim, appearing very out of place.

Jian Rong's first instinct was to move his foot off of the coffee table.

"…what are you two doing?" Ding-*ge* followed Lu Boyuan in. "Comparing foot hair? Kudos to you both for even coming up with something like that, can't you compare something better?"

A phone ringtone sounded. Lu Boyuan put the stocking down across the sofa armrest before he answered the call and walked outside.

Ding-*ge* quickly called out to him. "Where are you going?"

Lu Boyuan answered, "Express delivery."

Only once the front door closed did Jian Rong shift over to the other side of the couch and snatch up the stocking. He lifted his foot and started to slip the stocking back on.

"What are you doing?" Ding-*ge* stopped him, startled. "You want to put it on again?"

The other three people looked over as well. Jian Rong froze in his stocking-wearing posture for a few seconds before he also took off the remaining stocking. "No."

Ding-*ge* unlocked his phone and checked it. "The results of today's stream were pretty good. Number one in both heat points and popularity, and you shot straight up to number five on this week's platform-wide gift list."

"Only number five?" Yuan Qian looked up from his phone. "He must've received almost a million yuan in terms of gifts today, right? That only got him to the top five?"

There was nowhere to put the stockings, so Jian Rong decided to just stuff it into the pockets of his jacket.

Hearing that comment, he swiftly looked up. "A million?"

"To be exact, it's 1.17 million." Ding-*ge* breezily calculated it. "Not including the free gifts, and taking out the platform's cut and the taxes, there should be about five to six hundred thousand yuan remaining. The money is trivial, the key thing is the amount of attention you received. You gained more fans in one day than some other people do in an entire month… see, you didn't lose out by crossdressing this time, did you?"

Seeing Jian Rong's astonished expression, Yuan Qian said, amused, "What's with that 'I've never experienced this before' look, you were a big streamer before."

It was true that Jian Rong could be considered a big streamer.

But though there were many viewers in the LoL category, few were actually willing to smash gifts. If the monthly gift rankings weren't full of outdoor streamers, then it would be taken over by beauty streamers; the only LoL

streamers who received a lot of gifts were the female ones. Before, Jian Rong always had to rely on his base salary and his allotted cut from free gifts in order to make a living.

Xiao Bai picked up an orange from the table. “Forget it, haven’t you guys seen his streaming style? It only attracts trolls, not gifts.”

The front door opened and Lu Boyuan came back, a package wedged under one arm while he carried a cake box in his other hand.

Ding-*ge* looked behind him and lifted an eyebrow. “Hm? It was delivered? How come the delivery person didn’t call me?”

Jian Rong turned his head around too and blinked blankly when he saw the cake that Lu Boyuan was carrying in his left hand.

“I happened to run into them, so I just accepted it.” Lu Boyuan lifted his foot and pushed the door closed.

Ding-*ge* was bewildered. “How did you know that this cake was ours? I don’t think I filled in the exact address.”

Lu Boyuan set the cake box down on the coffee table. “The only thing you’re missing is the name on the cake.”

The little figurine on top of the cake had dyed blue hair and was wearing headphones. There was a medal hanging on the front of its chest as well, and it wore a sour expression.

“Oh shit! Cake! It’s been so long since I’ve eaten cake!!” Xiao Bai was excited for two seconds before he looked at Ding-*ge* in confusion. “How come I didn’t get any cake when it was my birthday?”

Yuan Qian said cheerily, "I didn't get one either."

"Never mind you all, even I didn't get a cake." Ding-*ge* picked up the box cutter and roughly cut through the bow on top of the cake box packaging. "Isn't this his eighteenth birthday? So I thought that I should at least buy him a cake… none of you celebrated your eighteenth birthdays here at the base, what's the point of making up for it with a cake in retrospect."

Jian Rong propped his elbows up against his knees and leaned forward, staring at the little figurine on the cake for quite some time. "…what's around my neck?"

Ding-*ge* let out an "oh." "The medal for the S11[1] Worlds finals."

It was a little hard to explain the expression in everyone's eyes as they turned to look at him.

"What?" Ding-*ge* was bold in his conviction. "Can't I seek out a good omen? Hurry up and eat so you guys can sleep, there's still a practice match tomorrow… Xiao Lu, do you want me to help open your package while we're at it?"

Lu Boyuan put down the package next to the couch. "No need."

Ding-*ge* stuck the "18" birthday candles into the cake. "What are you supposed to do when celebrating a birthday again? Sing Happy Birthday?"

Jian Rong rejected it without even thinking about it. "Doesn't need to be that troublesome."

Ding-*ge* thought about it. A few grown men huddled together singing Happy Birthday was indeed a bit foolish. "Then you should at least blow out the candles and make a wish, right."

Jian Rong hesitated briefly before he reluctantly nodded and agreed.

“Lighter… where’s my lighter?” Ding-*ge* felt around his pockets for a while. Perplexed, he was about to go back to the other room to search for it when a black lighter with gold edges was suddenly proffered to him.

Ding-*ge* took it and flicked open the lid before pressing down on the sparkwheel. He was about to light the candles when he suddenly stopped moving.

Lu Boyuan’s extended hand was still frozen in midair, and he let out a rare curse in his mind. He imperceptibly leaned to the right, lengthening the distance between himself and the person in front of him.

Sure enough, Ding-*ge*’s head whipped around as he sputtered, “Lu Boyuan you’re smoking again?! Just what did the doctor say during the checkup last time? Is it so hard for you all to quit smoking for two months? Are you all internet addicted young men or tobacco addicted young men, ah? Oh—I get it now, you went outside earlier so you could smoke, right? Amazing, you even learned how to use getting a delivery as a coverup…”

Lu Boyuan sat down on the sofa’s armrest and said helplessly, “I didn’t smoke, that thing was just in my pocket the entire time.”

“What’s the point of carrying it around if you’re not smoking? For lighting?” Ding-*ge* maintained his stooped posture and randomly picked out the person who was sitting the closest to Lu Boyuan. “Jian Rong, sniff his hand, see if there’s any hint of smoke!”

Jian Rong: “…”

Jian Rong was about to say that people needed to have faith in each other when Lu Boyuan suddenly stretched his hand towards him.

Lu Boyuan was sitting on the armrest near Jian Rong, so his hand just happened to stop next to Jian Rong's head, neither too close nor too far.

Lu Boyuan's palm faced upwards, his fingers curled inwards lazily; a vein bulged outwards slightly near his wrist.

A few seconds later, Jian Rong leaned a bit closer and sniffed his hand.

There was a faint fragrance, most likely because Lu Boyuan had washed his hands with soap after he was done gaming.

Jian Rong sniffed twice, his exhales brushing lightly against Lu Boyuan's index finger.

The rabbit ears followed its master's head back to their original position. Jian Rong said flatly, "No smell of smoke."

For a very brief moment, Lu Boyuan lost his train of thought, and he only withdrew his hand after the "18" candles had been ignited. "Satisfied?"

"Just because you didn't smoke today doesn't mean you didn't smoke at all." After lighting the candles, Ding-*ge* slipped the lighter into his own pocket. "I'm confiscating the lighter for now, I'll give it back to you once the smoking ban is over."

Lu Boyuan put his right hand into his pocket and rubbed the patch of skin that had just been blown on using his thumb. "No need to confiscate it, you can have it."

Ding-*ge* laughed out of anger. "Damn you… I'm laying down a new rule. From now on, if you see anyone smoking, report them straight to me. For each successful report, I'll give you two thousand yuan of my own money as a prize."

“Wow… how could you bring a harmful practice like reporting others into the team?” After Xiao Bai finished his exaggerated act, he raised his hand. “I’m reporting P-baby for smoking on the way to the base, two sticks, does that mean I get four thousand?”

Pine lifted his hand and rapped him twice on the head.

“If it happened already, it doesn’t count. In the future, immediately take a picture if you see someone smoking, you’ll get the money based on photo evidence.” Done messing around, Ding-*ge* said, “Come on, make a wish and blow out the candles. How about you just wish to win the World Championship…”

Jian Rong lowered his head and blew out the candles right right away.

Ding-*ge*: “…”

Jian Rong said, “Don’t need to wish for that, I can win the championship all on my own.”

Lu Boyuan laughed when he heard that.

This fierce energy… it had been a very long time since he last saw something like it.

Even though the other people in the team also wanted to win, after playing competitively for a few seasons, nobody dared to say “*I’m going to become the champion*” so easily anymore.

“This is youth.” Ding-*ge* sighed, deeply moved, before he handed the knife to Jian Rong. “Here, the first slice. After we eat this cake, we’ll instantly win the championship.”

It sounded like he was teasing a child. Jian Rong sneered before he took the knife and cut the cake.

The preordered cake was very small, and it was just the right size for each person to get one slice.

Because he was the birthday boy, Jian Rong received the largest slice. The person who usually didn't touch any kind of dessert after dinner sat obediently on the couch today and ate his cake.

All of a sudden, Xiao Bai scooted over with an enormous chunk of cream stuck on his finger.

"Don't touch me." Jian Rong's voice was chilly. "If you get it on my jacket, I'll log into your account tomorrow to AFK and flame other people."

Xiao Bai froze. "It's not like you know my password!"

Jian Rong: "The *pinyin* for 'P-baby's little support.'"

Xiao Bai whirled around and smeared the cream onto Pine's face.

"Ding-*ge*." Yuan Qian raised his head. "Could you get me an admission ticket for our next match?"

Ding-*ge* didn't bother looking up. "What for? Your girlfriend's coming to watch?"

"Yeah." Yuan Qian chuckled good-naturedly. "She wanted to come when she heard that it was going to be held at our home stadium."

"No problem, I'll tell someone to get you a ticket tomorrow." Only then did Ding-*ge* remember something, and he looked towards Jian Rong. "They give us

admission tickets for every match, but none of these people ever want them, so I always forgot to tell you… if you need any, just ask me."

Jian Rong shook his head. "I don't need any either."

Xiao Bai heaved a sigh while he ate his cake. "Back when I first started playing competitively, I still remember how I really liked giving out admission tickets. I would give them to anyone who asked, all the way up until this one time a dumbass went and resold the ticket I gave him. After that, I never gave a ticket to anyone again… hey, *ge*, didn't you also experience something like that before?"

Lu Boyuan broke off a chunk of cake using his fork. "Really? I don't remember anymore."

"I do, it was when we were playing in the secondary league." Yuan Qian interjected, "At that time, both my parents wanted to come watch too, so I asked you if you still had your ticket. But you said… you gave your ticket to a little scalper."

Jian Rong paused mid-chew, and his head shot up.

Lu Boyuan contemplated for a while before he nodded. "I remember now."

For once, Pine spoke. "How come I don't remember that."

"You hadn't joined the team yet." Lu Boyuan scraped off the cream on top of the cake. "The boss of an internet cafe chased out a kid who was looking for work. After that, he sat in the doorway and kept wiping away his tears… I didn't have any money on me, so I just gave the ticket to him."

Jian Rong's entire body went rigid.

Yuan Qian said, puzzled, "Then why call him a little scalper?"

Lu Boyuan said mildly, “I forgot my ID in the internet cafe, so I went back to get it. That kid was in the middle of negotiating the ticket price with someone, and from the get go he doubled it.”

“*Cough—cough cough…*” Jian Rong choked on his cake, and he covered his mouth, coughing continuously.

His disruption attracted the other people’s attention. Jian Rong bent his arm to cover his face, and he waved his hand while coughing, indicating that he was fine.

“Scalping the ticket at such a young age, people today are truly becoming degenerates!” Xiao Bai said resentfully, “*Ge*, at that time why didn’t you go and seize that damn little brat?!”

Originally, Lu Boyuan was going to seize him.

But he had been short on time, and when he saw the kid’s face, reddened from the heat, the tip of his nose dripping with sweat… he just let it pass.

Jian Rong was still coughing. When Lu Boyuan looked over again, Jian Rong’s entire face had turned red because of his coughing.

Lu Boyuan put down his cake, picked up a bottle of unopened spring water, and handed it over.

The moment Lu Boyuan extended his hand, he seemed to recall something, and his eyebrow lifted upwards very slightly.

Jian Rong didn’t notice his expression, and he reached out a hand to accept the water, but he momentarily wasn’t able to take it.

Lu Boyuan was holding onto the bottle a little tightly.

That kind of strength seemed to last for only a split second. Before Jian Rong could grow suspicious, Lu Boyuan had already let go.

Jian Rong twisted open the cap and had to take three consecutive gulps before he could calm down.

Yuan Qian laughed. “That kid was even able to sell a secondary league ticket at twice its price… how to put it, he actually had quite some potential.”

There was a beat of silence before Lu Boyuan gave an “en.” He said slowly, “It was too long ago, so I don’t remember it clearly anymore.What actually happened might be different, can’t say for sure.”

Right after he said that, Lu Boyuan saw a pair of rabbit ears give a large bob up and down, as if its owner had let out a long breath.

After the party disbanded, Jian Rong went back to his room, took off the jacket, and checked it all over three times.

Once he confirmed that there weren’t any stains on it, he went to knock on Lu Boyuan’s door, carrying the jacket in his arms.

The door opened after his first knock.

Jian Rong said, “I’m here to return the jacket…”

Lu Boyuan pulled open the door. “I was about to look for you, come in.”

After Jian Rong entered the room, Lu Boyuan closed the door, turned around, and saw the length of Jian Rong’s waist exposed underneath the sailor outfit.

Jian Rong was thin, so naturally his waist was also more slender than that of an average teenager boy’s. Lu Boyuan only glanced at it for a second before he

averted his gaze.

The instant Jian Rong came in, he saw the opened package lying on the ground with a shoebox inside.

“Open it and take a look.” Lu Boyuan’s voice came from behind him.

Jian Rong was startled, and he didn’t move.

“Your birthday gift.” Lu Boyuan said, “See if it fits or not.”

Jian Rong’s intention was to say “*no need*.”

But Lu Boyuan’s gift… at the same time, he really did want it.

If he accepted this present and gave Lu Boyuan one equal in value once his birthday rolled around, then it should be fine.

In the end, Jian Rong followed his heart. He put the jacket down on the chair before he knelt down to open the shoebox.

Inside was a pair of sneakers[2], with milky white and light gray sections joined together. A little pendant hung from the shoes, and the logo on the side of the sneakers was made of woven jacquard.

Jian Rong didn’t really know much about sneakers. He only recognized that the brand was Nike, and that these shoes were very nice.

Lu Boyuan crossed his arms and leaned against the wall. “Try it on.”

Jian Rong’s shoe size was 40[3], and the sneakers fit perfectly on him; the only problem was that it didn’t really match the sailor outfit he was wearing.

Jian Rong sat on Lu Boyuan's chair and bent over, looking at the shoes from every which way and liking its appearance from each angle.

He was about to thank Lu Boyuan when a sentence suddenly floated down from above him—

"So you didn't end up becoming a little scalper."

Jian Rong's heart skipped a beat.

…

A long pause later, Jian Rong shut his eyes briefly before he lifted his head in resignation.

Lu Boyuan was still leaning against the wall. He wore a faint smile, and he cast his eyes downward as he asked, "Why didn't you sell the ticket?"

Knowing that Lu Boyuan had recognized him, Jian Rong swallowed and only answered slowly after quite some time had passed. "Really wanted to watch… so I didn't sell it."

Lu Boyuan laughed and gave an "en."

They were very close to each other, one standing and one sitting. Just by reaching out his hand, Lu Boyuan could touch Jian Rong's hair.

It seemed like Lu Boyuan had just washed his hands, as his palm was somewhat cool. The force behind his ruffling was a bit heavier than it had been any time before.

He said: "You're all grown up now."

……

Jian Rong came carrying a jacket, and he left carrying a shoebox.

After returning to his room, Jian Rong leaned against the bathroom door and breathed deeply, his heart beating so fast that it felt like it was about to explode.

Before he could fully recover, his phone suddenly vibrated on the nearby table.

[Ding-*ge*: Do you still want that sailor outfit?]

[R-ong: No]

[Ding-*ge*: Then you can change out of it and give it back to me, I'll go store it away.]

He had to find something to do to divert his attention. Jian Rong rubbed his face and took off his shirt.

Next was the skirt, then the bow tie, the rabbit ears, the stockings… the stockings…

Where were the stockings?!

Translation Notes

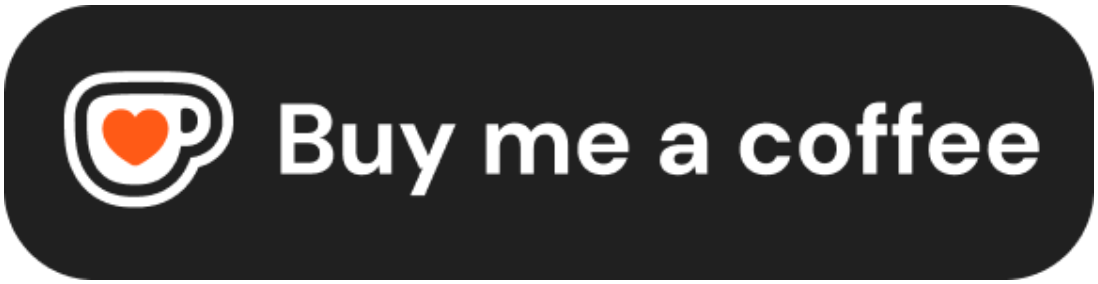
1. *In case you forgot, season 10 just ended in ICDI (and in reality!)* ^

2.

hot damn these shoes are Expensive – I believe they're from the 2020 Dior x Air Jordan 1 collection?? But idk anything about sneakers so ^

3. *Google says size 40 in China is apparently anywhere from 6.5-8.5 US (men's??) size and won't give me a consistent answer sooo here's the ballpark range* ^

Yan: hhhhh the Soft (heh) Moment when LBY figures out JR's past always gets me ;;; I genuinely don't think english does it justice. I'll share the Chinese in case anyone is curious, but LBY says: 长这么大了, which to me personally gives off this kind of wistful, nostalgic, warm feeling >< and of course, Jiang Zi Bei is the master of comedy – I wonder where those stockings are…? :thinking face:



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ICDI Chapter 53: You left your stockings in my jacket.

Thank you to Anon for the Ko-fi!

In the end, Jian Rong even laid flat on the ground to look underneath his bed, but he still couldn't find those stockings.

He sat on the wooden floorboards and started to think back. The first thing that came to his mind was the image of Lu Boyuan's hand holding his stocking.

Jian Rong slapped himself on the forehead before continuing to search back through his memories. Lu Boyuan had set the stocking down on the couch, and Jian Rong had picked it up to put it on… no, he hadn't worn it, he had stuffed it into the pockets of the jacket.

The pockets of Lu Boyuan's jacket.

Jian Rong slapped himself again on the forehead.

Dammit—he had inspected the jacket so many times earlier, even the collar and the cuffs, but the only thing he forgot to check was the pockets.

He had been too careless when stuffing the stockings inside, and he had stuffed a stocking in each pocket. The hosiery was already thin in the first place, and with the little flaps of cloth on top of the pockets covering them up, the stockings weren't visible at all.

Jian Rong took out his phone, intending to send Lu Boyuan a text.

“Captain, my stockings are still in your jacket pockets.”

Jian Rong’s fingertips paused.

How come that sounded so weird??

And also… if he sent that text, wouldn’t he have to go back to Lu Boyuan’s room again?

Just now, after Jian Rong had been exposed, Lu Boyuan hadn’t asked any questions.

He hadn’t asked why Jian Rong wanted to work part-time at an internet cafe at such a young age, nor had he asked why Jian Rong never said anything despite recognizing Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan had only silently ruffled Jian Rong’s hair. A long while later, he finally said a “*happy eighteenth birthday*.”

A few years had passed since that time, and Lu Boyuan was no longer the same cold-faced, taciturn youth from the internet cafe doorway back then. He still didn’t talk much, but his every word and action was diffused with a warmth that belonged solely to Lu Boyuan.

His heart, which had finally managed to calm down, started to go crazy again. Jian Rong stood up from the ground and deleted the text he had written, deciding that he would go and get the stockings back tomorrow.

[R-ong: I can just leave the clothes here, too lazy to go downstairs now]

[Ding-*ge*: …]

[R-ong: ?]

[Ding-*ge*: That's fine but… you won't toss out that outfit, right?]

Jian Rong: "…"

No wonder he wanted the clothes back this late at night; he was afraid that Jian Rong would throw them out.

[R-ong: Not in the habit of tossing out clothes.]

That evening, Jian Rong had a particularly strange dream.

He dreamed that he was hosting a meet and greet with his water friends. The first program of the meet and greet was a large-scale father and son recognition ceremony, which became a group fight after a while—it was him versus a hundred others, and he beat up those dumbasses, who always called him a dwarf king in the barrage, until they begged for forgiveness. An observer called the police, and Jian Rong went to the police station to fill out a form. The police officer pointed at the form and asked him why he filled out his gender as male when he was clearly female—only then did Jian Rong realize that he was wearing the sailor outfit and that the rabbit ears were still freaking on his head.

Then Lu Boyuan arrived at the police station to fetch him. After exiting the police station, Jian Rong took off his stockings and stuffed them inside Lu Boyuan's pockets, saying that they were a gift of gratitude for bailing him out.

There were too many elements in this dream, and Jian Rong's first instinct upon waking up was to raise his head and see what the hell he was wearing. When he saw his pajamas, he let out a sigh of relief and laid back down again.

He definitely wouldn't be able to sleep anymore after that. Jian Rong closed his eyes and lazed around in his bed for five more minutes. He recalled the happiness he felt from beating up the water friends in his dream earlier before he flipped over and got up to wash.

In the practice room, Xiao Bai sat in front of the computer, one leg propped up over the other. As he gamed, he said, "The early bird gets the worm. While they're all sleeping, I'll secretly train by myself, and the difference in our strength levels will instantly appear during the competition. If I keep this up long-term, it won't be long before my endorsement fee will surpass my *ge*'s, wah—"

Before he could finish dragging out the "*wah*," the door to the practice room was pushed open. Xiao Bai turned his head, mouth open, and saw Jian Rong enter with a blue bird's nest on his head.

Xiao Bai usually put his webcam on the left, facing right, because he felt like he was amazingly handsome from that angle.

As a result, the water friends saw Jian Rong sit down in the chair next to Xiao Bai's, eyelids drooping, a scowl on his face. The marks that had been pressed into the side of his face from sleeping hadn't even disappeared yet. He bent over and powered on the computer without sparing Xiao Bai a single glance from beginning to end.

Xiao Bai looked at the dark circles underneath Jian Rong's eyes. "…are you awake or are you sleepwalking?"

"I'm awake." Jian Rong replied emotionlessly, "But you're indeed sleepwalking."

The water friends burst out laughing, and Xiao Bai had to think for quite a while before he realized that Jian Rong was mocking what he said before.

"How am I sleepwalking? Thirty percent predestined by fate, seventy percent gained from working late, stake it all to become great!"

Jian Rong opened the game and asked without even looking back, "How much is the difference between your endorsement fee and Captain's?"

"My *ge*'s is just," Xiao Bai coughed lightly, "higher than mine by two… two or three or four times, maybe."

The water friends laughed even more uproariously. Although Xiao Bai was only a support, his net worth was already considered quite high among the professional players. To double or triple or quadruple his base…

Jian Rong sneered. "Mn, good luck to you."

After being ridiculed first thing in the morning, Xiao Bai gulped down half of his iced soy milk out of anger. Finally, he slammed the soy milk down heavily on the table before he turned his head.

The water friends all thought that they were about to witness the scene of TTC's veteran member and newcomer not getting along for the very first

time when—

“Wanna duo queue? Baby.”

[Hahaha dumb baby~]

[You even freaking endured that??]

[You’re really capable of doing anything in order to climb, huh.]

Xiao Bai thought, *Or else what, if you have the skill then why don’t you come and argue with him ah?*

“My baby ADC isn’t awake yet, and I ended up being screwed over in my last game, so I don’t want to solo queue anymore.” Xiao Bai batted his eyes at Jian Rong. “Wanna queue?”

“Don’t call me baby, it’s really gross.” Jian Rong said, “Invite me.”

Xiao Bai quickly sent out a party invite. Then he asked on behalf of the water friends in the barrage, “Are you not going to stream?”

“No.” Jian Rong joined the party. “I’m not giving them the chance to ruin my mood this early in the morning.”

Most likely because they had just resumed practice, everyone got up early today, besides their captain.

After Pine came, Xiao Bai went to duo queue with him, while Jian Rong went to queue with Yuan Qian. It wasn’t going very well, as they had run into actors[1] for two games in a row already.

Just as Jian Rong was finishing up his mini essay flaming the actors and was reporting his teammates, the door to the practice room opened again.

Jian Rong shot a look over his shoulder and instantly froze.

Lu Boyuan wore a tired expression, and his eyes had become monolids because he had just woken up. For once, he was wearing a jacket today—the jacket that Jian Rong had returned to him last night.

Jian Rong stared at the unobtrusive lumps in his pockets and felt his scalp prickle slightly.

"Xiao Rong?" Yuan Qian called his name and prompted, "Pick your roles."

"…oh." Jian Rong turned his head back around in a panic and chose his roles. In his mind, he came up with thousands of different ways to get his stockings back.

Lu Boyuan didn't notice Jian Rong's gaze.

Yesterday, when the auntie was cleaning his room, she hadn't closed the window completely. He hadn't noticed, since the curtains were drawn, so he had ended up being blown by the wind the entire night. From the moment he woke up today, his head felt a bit heavy, and his throat was uncomfortable as well, which wasn't a good sign.

As Lu Boyuan walked over to his seat, Xiao Bai suddenly looked back and called out to him. "*Ge*, Ding-*ge* told me to give the lighter back to you."

Lu Boyuan entered the livestream frame, and for a moment, the barrage in the stream was full of "*ahhh*."

Lu Boyuan paused, and his eyebrows furrowed slightly. "He's got nothing better to do?"

"He said that he checked the price of the lighter and decided not to confiscate it in the end. As long as you don't smoke, it's fine…" Xiao Bai said, "*Ge*, what's wrong with your voice?"

"Nothing." Lu Boyuan took the lighter and slipped it into his pocket.

Then, his fingertips brushed against something soft and velvety.

For a second, Lu Boyuan couldn't remember what he had stuffed into the jacket pocket, so he just pulled the item out.

The tens of thousands of people in Xiao Bai's stream watched with wide eyes as their God Lu tugged out a familiar girly stocking from his pocket.

Xiao Bai was stunned.

Pine also lifted an eyebrow.

On the other hand, Lu Boyuan didn't really have any extra feelings. He stared at the stocking and only thought about it briefly before he more or less understood what had happened.

Jian Rong had encountered the actor from the previous game again. From the get-go, the other person said that he was going to play properly this round, and he asked his teammates to give him a chance. Jian Rong

preselected Teemo to scare him, and he had just sent out a "*dumbasses don't deserve chances*" when he suddenly sensed someone walk over from behind him.

Before he could look behind him, a pair of stockings was placed onto his desk.

"You left your stockings in my jacket." Lu Boyuan's slightly raspy voice floated over from atop his head.

Click. Jian Rong locked in Teemo.

Jian Rong: "……"

Yuan Qian's loud voice resounded through the base. "Fuck! You really locked in Teemo ah!!! We'll be fined if we throw the game, do you know that!!!"

"…I'll withdraw." Jian Rong exited the game, pulled open the desk drawer, and stuffed the stockings inside before he forced himself to look up and explain, "I forgot last night."

Lu Boyuan let out an "en" before he picked up his water cup from his own desk and walked out of the practice room.

Leaving the game meant he had to wait five minutes before he could queue again. While he was waiting, Jian Rong took a sip of water. Then, at the end of his patience, he turned his head and asked Xiao Bai, who was next to him, "What are you looking at? Will your points rise if you look at me a few more times??"

Xiao Bai was bursting with questions that he both wanted to ask but didn't dare to ask. As a result, he simply tilted his monitor towards Jian Rong so that he could see the stream's barrage—

[Have things become rated R???]

[Wasn't God Lu wearing the same jacket that the little dumbass wore yesterday in his stream?]

[Fucking hell, he earns so much money off of us, then he goes and wears some other man's clothes. Little dumbass I'm really freaking looking down on you.]

[Stockings, left in the jacket? How did it get left there?? Is it what I'm imagining???]

[You all are sick, stop with the YY okay? My husband lent that jacket yesterday out of the kindness of his heart, it's obvious that Soft stuffed the stockings into the pockets after taking them off.]

[Who would stuff stockings into jacket pockets? Soft definitely did it on purpose, vomit]

[Exactly, my dumbass son is actually quite scheming, Dad can be at ease now.]

"……" Jian Rong retracted his gaze without saying a single word.

Xiao Bai thought that Jian Rong had restrained himself. He had just raised an eyebrow in surprise when he saw Jian Rong skillfully pull up the

streaming platform, start a stream, and turn on his mic.

“Don’t spout BS in someone else’s stream.” Jian Rong said, “Come and lane against your dad.”

…

Knowing that he had caught a cold, Lu Boyuan took medicine for three days straight.

But he was likely to feel sleepy after taking it, and he was unable to concentrate or focus during their practice matches. After he felt like he was improving, he stopped taking the medicine.

All the way up until the spring season competition schedule resumed—on the day that they were playing against Fighting Tiger, Lu Boyuan developed a low fever.

On the bus taking them to the arena, Ding-*ge* walked over to Lu Boyuan’s seat, holding bread and medicine. “Eat something to fill your stomach, and then take the medicine.”

“No.” Lu Boyuan refused hoarsely.

Maybe it was because of the fever, but Lu Boyuan hadn’t taken off his hat even after getting on the bus. His entire body was slumped leisurely against the window, and he emitted a “*do not disturb unless necessary*” aura from head to toe.

The bus was about to start driving. Ding-*ge* clicked his tongue before he stuffed the bread and medicine into Jian Rong's hands, since he was sitting next to Lu Boyuan. "You coax him to eat some."

Ding-*ge* sat back down in his original seat. Jian Rong held the two items, feeling somewhat at a loss… how to coax Lu Boyuan?

Halfway to the stadium, Lu Boyuan was about to close his eyes and rest when the medicine and bread were extended in front of him once again.

The brim of his hat was tugged very low, and he lifted his head to look at Jian Rong only after he saw those two items.

Jian Rong: "How about you just take one pill?"

Lu Boyuan waited quietly for a few seconds before he asked lazily, a hint of exhaustion in his voice, "This is how you coax someone?"

Jian Rong pondered a bit before he opened the medicine box. "I'll help squeeze one out for you."

Seeing that he was actually about to squeeze out a pill, Lu Boyuan laughed in spite of himself and reached out to stop Jian Rong.

Because of his fever, Lu Boyuan's body temperature was a bit high, and Jian Rong felt like the back of his hand had been momentarily scalded.

"Really, I'm not going to take it." When Jian Rong continued to stubbornly hold onto the medicine pills, Lu Boyuan paused briefly. "How about this.

You keep the medicine… and I'll eat it after we're done playing. That should work, right?"

"…you don't feel uncomfortable?"

"I don't." Lu Boyuan's voice was mild. "Once we're finished, you can give it to me then?"

Ding-*ge* was sitting in the row right in front of them, and when he heard Jian Rong's hesitant "*okay*," he closed his eyes and clicked his tongue.

Just who the hell was coaxing who here.

Translation Notes

1. *Mentioned this before but it was a while ago, so just another note since actors do come up frequently later – actors are especially prevalent in the higher tiers of China's servers. They're like trolls but worse since usually they're paid to win/trade/throw games to boost elo (basically "acting" for someone else's benefit)* ^

Wei: The secondhand embarrassment for JR I can't asdfha I'm dying but also can't stop laughing ahaha

Also, here's some great fanart for ICDI! Thanks to teal96ko and Yuuki for sharing some of these in the comments, and others are linked from the author's Weibo. (The captions are just people fangirling and don't have any relation to the story lol)

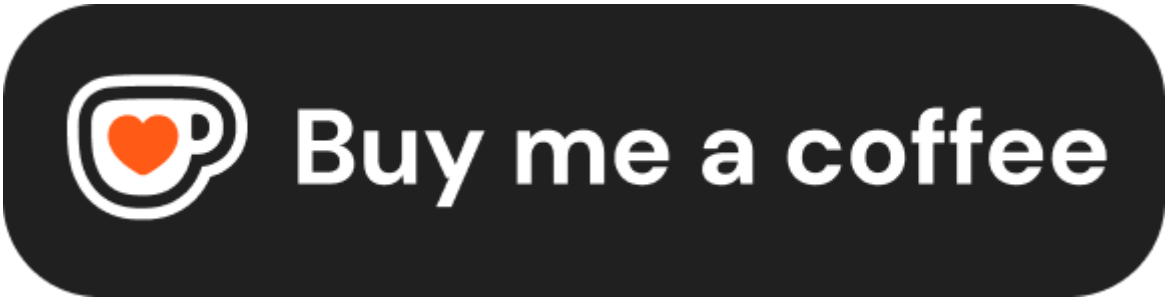
1. https://www.ice99.com/cartoon/2763171.html: “Stupid son don’t be mad, God Lu is here to feed you candy.” – translated by Shen in the last chapter!

2. https://twitter.com/jiyataoo/status/1300012517704392704?s=19

3. https://m.weibo.cn/status/4544476980447464 This is the scene where JR is imagining holding a fan meeting where he’ll beat up his water friends

4. https://m.weibo.cn/7478598109/4528521357036102

5. https://m.weibo.cn/6343845769/4526736363283599



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ICDI Chapter 54: Excuse me, how do you say “scram for laozi” in Korean?

Like before, they were the second match of the night.

Today, the competition was taking place in TTC’s home stadium. Jian Rong had passed by this place before in the past.

There were many esports teams based in Shanghai, so originally no team in Shanghai had their own home stadium. However, TTC’s boss had too much money, so he had directly opened an offline esports arena that was both spacious and close to the river. At the time, it had even been a hot topic among the esports circle for a while.

After TTC’s boss negotiated with the LPL, that arena also ended up being integrated into the ranks of the LPL’s competition stadiums.

When he got out of the car, Jian Rong raised his head and took it in anew. TTC’s home stadium was an extremely cool-looking black building with a sharply angular white crown logo embedded on its body. Matched with the slightly protruding letters of “TTC,” the building was low-key yet handsome.

“At night, our team logo, name, and the edges of the building all light up, it looks super cool. You can take a look when we’re leaving.” Noticing Jian Rong’s stare, Yuan Qian patted his shoulder.

Jian Rong snapped out of it. He shifted his gaze away before walking into the arena. “Okay.”

Lu Boyuan had bundled himself up very tightly today. The brim of his hat covered his eyes completely, and everything else was hidden underneath his mask; adding on the black uniform with white lettering, he seemed entirely like a patch of darkness. On the other hand, he did match quite well with the building.

Immediately after entering the break room, Jian Rong went to close the window securely before sitting down.

The TV on the wall was broadcasting the current match. The first match had already entered the pick/ban phase, and it was PUD versus UUG.

Jian Rong had played one practice match against UUG before, but he wasn't very familiar with the team. The only thing he remembered was that the team hadn't entered the World Championship finals last year.

As for PUD… Jian Rong had never played a practice match against PUD before.

"PUD is using Mordekaiser with Leona?" Yuan Qian frowned as he watched the stream. "They've really got some guts."

"It's a new strategy pulled from Korea's high-ranked games." While Ding-*ge* noted it down, he said, "Recently PUD has probably been practicing quite a few new tactics from Korea."

"It's not something the Korean server came up with. That combination has been showing up in the national server's ranked games for a while now." Lu Boyuan coughed and said with a stuffy voice, "At the most, the Korean server just perfected this strategy. A champion like Mordekaiser… has high

DPS and is tanky enough. Paired with any hard CC champ, he'll be extremely strong regardless whether he's being played in mid or bot lane."

"Enough, you shouldn't speak so much with that voice of yours." Ding-*ge* was fully concentrated on the TV. "Let's see what happens first."

Xiao Bai propped up his chin on two hands and asked curiously, "In your opinion, how much money does PUD have to spend in order to schedule a practice match with a team from Korea?"

PUD hadn't scheduled practice matches with any of the LPL teams during the past few months. Instead, they had kept spending money to seek out Korean teams to practice with.

A few years ago, it wasn't possible to schedule a practice match with one of Korea's famous teams even if you spent money. In its early stages, the LPL lacked strength, so it was especially fond of copying Korean strategies. As a result, the relationship between the Chinese and Korean professional leagues hadn't been very friendly at first.

With the recent rise of the LPL, a few teams had actually managed to break through that blocked channel.

The only thing was – in the end, spending money to schedule practice matches was still a bit unpleasant to hear.

"How would I know? Originally I also thought about scheduling one or two matches with them before… but wasn't Xiao Lu the one who wasn't willing." Ding-*ge* muttered.

Lu Boyuan reclined on the sofa and didn't feel like explaining.

"I'm also unwilling." Jian Rong stuffed both hands into his pockets and said bluntly, "Paying to schedule a practice match? Shameful. And during these past few years, haven't the Korean teams also started to imitate our region's team compositions and strategies?"

"Exactly." Xiao Bai spouted wildly, "If any other pro league wants to schedule a practice match with us, I'd have to think it over first!"

"Enough, enough, I stopped considering it a long time ago. I feel like our coach group is already fairly developed now, and the other teams in the LPL are also very powerful. It's true that we don't need to seek out Korean teams. Let's first just concentrate on watching the match." After Ding-*ge* said that, he saw Lu Boyuan, who still hadn't taken off his mask or hat. Ding-*ge* couldn't help but sit down next to him and ask quietly, "The heater's on, do you not feel hot with how covered up you are?"

Lu Boyuan said, "No."

It would be best if he could force out some sweat; that way, it wouldn't be easy for his temperature to rocket upwards.

Lu Boyuan was sitting on the sofa next to the door, while Jian Rong was sitting on the one next to the window. It was the one farthest from Lu Boyuan, so Jian Rong couldn't hear what they were talking about.

Jian Rong was expressionlessly plotting the best way to naturally stand up and sit over there when Xiao Bai, who was next to him, suddenly let out a "*hey*."

“Oh shit.” Xiao Bai sat up straight and lowered his head for a few seconds before he said, “Jian Rong, your shoes are so cool.”

Jian Rong was wearing his new shoes today, the gift that Lu Boyuan had given him for his eighteen birthday.

Jian Rong subconsciously glanced at Lu Boyuan, who was watching the match, his chin slightly raised. Ding-*ge* was still prattling on next to him, so Lu Boyuan probably hadn’t overheard what Xiao Bai just said.

Jian Rong also felt like these shoes were cool. He nodded and replied with a profound, “Mn.”

“Are they the real deal?” Xiao Bai asked, full of intrigue.

Jian Rong: “Even more real than your teeth.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

“Did you win it during the online lottery or did you buy it from someone else?” Xiao Bai braced his chin on his hand. “Aren’t I just looking out for you? There are so many fake versions of this limited edition model.”

Jian Rong paused. “Limited edition?”

“Yeah.” When Xiao Bai saw Jian Rong’s expression, he was startled. “These are the shoes that you bought, but you didn’t know that?”

Jian Rong hesitated before he decided that it didn’t really seem like there was anything to hide. “Captain gave them to me as my birthday gift.”

“Fuck? My *ge* is that generous?!” Xiao Bai was momentarily astonished before he nodded. “Since my *ge* gave them to you, then there’s no need to worry. They’re definitely real.”

Jian Rong frowned. “How much do these shoes cost?”

Xiao Bai shook his head. “Unclear, the original price was 18,000 yuan. By now, it’s probably been inflated to… 100,000 yuan[1]?”

Jian Rong: “……”

Yuan Qian, off to the side, listened to their entire conversation and interjected, “You might not even be able to buy it at a hundred thousand. These shoes have a threshold, you have to spend at least 400,000 yuan before you can buy them. None of the people who can afford to buy it are particularly lacking in money, so they would rather keep it to wear themselves[2].”

Seeing Jian Rong’s shock, Yuan Qian chuckled and said, “Don’t worry, this is nothing for Captain, it’s just like a sprinkle of water. Don’t feel any pressure.”

Even though Xiao Bai was envious, he also nodded along. “That’s true, my *ge* has plenty of money. He’s just never given me shoes worth a hundred thousand before, that’s all.”

Never mind shoes worth a hundred thousand.

If Jian Rong added up all the shoes he had ever purchased in his past eighteen years of life and then multiplied the total by two, it still wouldn’t

equal a hundred thousand.

Jian Rong exhaled and thought, *At least I can also be considered a burgeoning rich young master right now, so I'm capable of buying a return present.* Otherwise, this gift… he really wouldn't be able to accept it.

"It's not like you're lacking anything, you have a whole cabinet of shoes." Yuan Qian comforted Xiao Bai, "Also, Xiao Rong is the one Captain recommended to the team, it's very normal for Captain to look after him."

Those words were inexplicably pleasing to Jian Rong's ears. He pursed his lips and was about to say something when—

"It's like the affection an older brother has for his younger brother." Yuan Qian continued, "When Pine just joined the team, didn't you also treat him very well?"

Pine didn't bother looking over. "It was so-so."

Xiao Bai instantly said, "P-baby you're so damn cruel."

The tiny smile that was about to emerge on Jian Rong's face vanished again. He leaned back on the sofa and started to coldly watch the match.

A few seconds later, he furrowed his eyebrows and felt like his current mood was somewhat baffling.

Was the relationship between an older and younger brother not good enough? It was already a very close relationship, what was there to be irritated over…

PUD's new mid laner coordinated extremely well with the rest of the team—or in other words, PUD's two Chinese players coordinated extremely well with the other three Korean players. The jungler, XIU, constantly ganked mid; the ADC, Baihe, didn't steal resources from his teammates; the support was almost always with the mid laner. In short, the formation was aimed to protect their two carries, top and mid.

Not long after, UUG was at a disadvantage, and it was estimated that they would lose within twenty-five minutes.

With the outcome of the game already set, Jian Rong didn't pay close attention to the match. From the corner of his eyes, he glimpsed a figure walking towards Lu Boyuan.

Their team's substitute jungler, Moon, offered Lu Boyuan some hot water, holding the cup with both hands.

Lu Boyuan swept a look over and took the cup, but didn't drink from it.

Moon seized the opportunity to sit down next to Lu Boyuan. He said something that caused Lu Boyuan to cast his eyes downward briefly while listening to him, before shaking his head.

Yuan Qian's voice dragged Jian Rong's attention back. "Moon is really quite the little fanboy of Captain."

"As if my *ge* is lacking fanboys." Xiao Bai yawned before he patted Jian Rong. "Speaking of which, Moon's just like you. He also joined because Captain picked him."

Jian Rong's expression didn't change. "...is that so?"

Xiao Bai hummed. "I remember at that time, there was only a month left before the competition began, and our team urgently needed a jungler sub. Originally, Ding-*ge* had contacted a Korean import player, but that person ended up acting pretentious about it for a long time... so my *ge* just straight up snatched the phone from Ding-*ge* and told the guy to beat it. Then he went to our trainee team and chose Moon."

Jian Rong was silent for a moment before he responded dryly, "Oh."

He remembered that Moon was seventeen this year. When Moon turned eighteen, would Lu Boyuan also give him a pair of shoes too?

During the second round of the match, Jian Rong paid very little attention to it. Just as he turned his head and was about to ask "*when is Moon's birthday*," the person sitting on the other side of the room called out to him.

"Jian Rong." Lu Boyuan said, "Come sit over here."

Jian Rong stood up and walked over. Moon glanced at the untouched water on the table before he silently shifted to make room for Jian Rong.

Lu Boyuan continued to watch the TV. A few seconds later, he asked, "Did you see Savior's last wave?"

Jian Rong paused. He thought that Lu Boyuan wanted him to learn from Savior, so Jian Rong started to say that he hadn't been paying attention.

“An example of a mistake.” Lu Boyuan continued, “His weak points are quite obvious, you can make note of them for the next time you face off against him.”

“…okay.” Jian Rong replied, “I’ll rewatch the recordings a few times once I get back.”

Lu Boyuan gave an “en.” A while later, he turned his head and asked, “If we played PUD today, what do you think your probability of winning is, if you and Savior laned against each other?”

Jian Rong lifted his eyes and met Lu Boyuan’s gaze. “80%.”

Lu Boyuan laughed.

Unhesitatingly stating that he was stronger than the up-and-coming mid laner whom the entire pro league viewed the most highly… that was Jian Rong’s style.

Since Lu Boyuan was wearing a mask, Jian Rong couldn’t make out his expression clearly. When he didn’t say anything, Jian Rong asked, “You don’t believe me?”

Lu Boyuan tilted his head to the side and coughed. He said, “I do.”

The sound of the audience’s cheers rose as PUD beautifully won their spring season match with a score of 2:0.

A staff member notified them to go on stage, and Lu Boyuan took off his mask and hat. Because his complexion was too pale, for once he didn’t

reject the request to put on makeup.

Right after TTC walked out of their break room, they ran into XIU and his team's new mid laner Savior, both of whom had just come out of the bathroom and were on their way back to the practice room.

"Yo." XIU smiled and joked, "God Lu put on makeup today? Now you're way too handsome."

Lu Boyuan swept a glance over him. "Don't mess around."

"How come your voice sounds so hoarse?" XIU lifted an eyebrow. "How about it, will you be able to beat Fighting Tiger in a bit?"

"Of course." Yuan Qian could tell that Lu Boyuan didn't want to speak, so he answered instead. "Your team's Mordekaiser and Leona are quite something."

"Just average, just average. We only wanted to try testing them out. Then you guys go ahead, I'll first…" Before XIU could finish speaking, Savior suddenly reached out from behind him and tugged on his clothes.

XIU was startled before he swiftly reacted. "Oh right, you have something to say to Soft, right?"

Jian Rong looked over.

Savior was twenty years old; he wore glasses, and he had both round eyes and a round face.

He stared at Jian Rong for a long time without saying anything.

“Soft, wait a moment, he’s not really good at Chinese.” XIU explained.

Jian Rong waited for a while before he lost his patience. “He can’t even force out a single word, how do you guys communicate with each other during competitions? Don’t tell me that you and the ADC are the ones learning Korean?”

“You…” Savior finally organized his thoughts. The first thing he did was lift his hand and give himself bunny ears on top of his head. “So cute[3].”

Jian Rong: “??”

“How-evuh, LoL, you…” Savior pointed at Jian Rong with his index finger before he wagged it and pointed at himself. “I – more powuh-ful.”

Everyone else: “……”

Nobody said it, but he actually did seem quite stupid cute.

Unfortunately, Jian Rong wasn’t buying it. It took him ten seconds to understand what the other person was trying to say.

Then, he inquired politely of XIU: “Excuse me, how do you say ‘scram for *laozi*’ in Korean?”

—

The author has something to say:

To clarify something – because the game meta is constantly changing, what I’m referring to in the novel is a mixed meta. It can be considered a meta

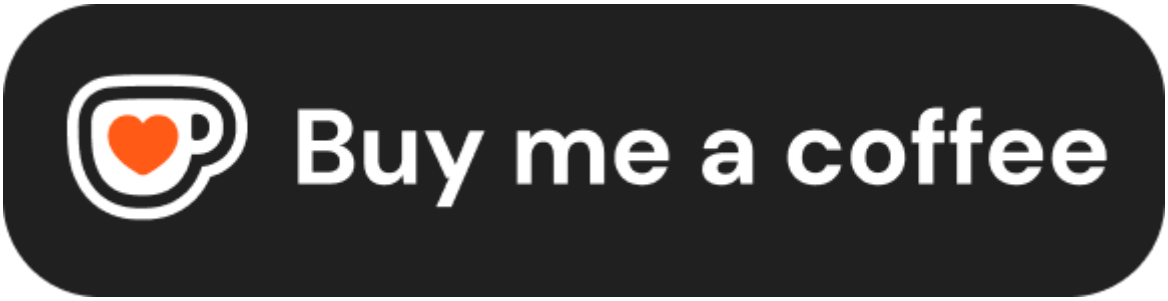
specific to this novel. Many backdrops (for example, the Shanghai main stadium) are just made up by me.

Translation Notes

1. *18,000 yuan = $2,730. 100,000 yuan = $15,000* ^
2. *I'm assuming he means rather keep it than sell it again for a profit* ^
3. *Spoken in English lolll* ^

Yan: Translated the author's note about meta just to emphasize again that while this is based off of LoL, many things might differ from what is actually currently meta/plausible in competitive play.

Also, Savior is a mega cutie lol~ the reason I will be translating his speech like that (how-evuh, etc) is because he uses incorrect tones due to his accent. Just wanted to clarify since he comes up a lot in the future!



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ICDI Chapter 55: “Stand up, leave the stage first.”

XIU was rendered speechless for a few seconds before he burst out laughing. “Don’t get too excited… it’s only because he still remembers those few ranked games where he encountered you previously. The day of your stream, he was holding his phone and watching the entire time, he really does think you’re cute.”

Xiao Bai thought, *You better fucking stop saying the word ‘cute,’ or else if this guy opens his mouth, nobody will be able to stop him.*

Sure enough, Jian Rong’s face had already soured quite a bit.

The staff member ahead of them saw that they had stopped, and the staff member hurried over to ask, “God Lu, what’s wrong? Can the team go on stage now? Fighting Tiger is about to go up.”

Lu Boyuan nodded without saying anything.

Jian Rong glanced at the back of Lu Boyuan’s head and swallowed down the ridicule that had just reached his mouth. He thought to himself, the faster they walked away, the faster they could play, and the faster they would be able to return to the base.

Unexpectedly, right after he took a single step, his name was called again.

Savior had been learning Chinese recently, but it was true that he had joined the LPL not too long ago, so he only knew some commonly used phrases for communicating in game.

Savior: “Soft, WeChat, can I?”

“No.” Jian Rong answered flatly, “I can’t speak[1] *simida*.”

His English made Lu Boyuan quirk his lips and chuckle. A heavy feeling intermittently traveled from the back of his head, but by the time Lu Boyuan turned his head again, he had already regained his original expression.

“Let’s go.”

Jian Rong let out a muffled “en” before he caught up with Lu Boyuan’s figure, both hands stuffed in his pockets, treading with his new shoes.

Fighting Tiger’s members were already sitting in their seats. All five veteran players had tall and sturdy builds, and they gave off a distinctive aura just by sitting there.

“Da Niu-*ge* seems to have become even sturdier lately, the team uniform can’t even contain his muscles anymore. It looks like Fighting Tiger is gonna have to get a new team uniform for my Niu-*ge* again.” Commentator A said jokingly.

Commentator B nodded. “Yes, as veteran players, all of Fighting Tiger’s members usually pay a lot of attention to working out. It’s true, you can only perform better by maintaining a healthy body—TTC’s members are coming on stage now. Oh my, today God Lu… looks so handsome?”

The camera instantly gave Lu Boyuan a big close-up shot.

The man was expressionlessly checking the state of his equipment. He was indeed handsome, but he appeared much colder than normal, and he hadn't spoken once since sitting down.

"*Ai*, I can suddenly sort of understand some of what the female fans feel." Commentator A sighed.

"Enough, be quiet, if you keep talking you're going to end up violating the rules." Commentator B lifted an eyebrow. "Soft doesn't seem to have a great expression either? What's up with TTC today?"

"Ah? Hasn't Soft always looked like this? The day he walks on stage with a smile, that's when things will become weird." Commentator A abruptly laughed. "However, speaking of which… director, don't you know better? Shouldn't you be focusing the camera on Qian-*ge* today?"

Although Yuan Qian behaved in a fairly low-key way, nowadays people paid just as much attention to professional gamers as they did to celebrities. In addition, since Yuan Qian had never deliberately hidden it before, the romantic relationship between him and the female streamer Youyou was common knowledge in the circle.

Meanwhile, Youyou was at the stadium today, sitting in the first row. She was trying to be extremely covert, not moving at all, but the cameraman still found her. Every time, the audience cam would specially focus on her.

Youyou didn't bother avoiding the camera after being discovered. When the camera panned back to her, she swiftly pulled out a support banner

from behind her body. The large characters written on it flashed with bursts of light—

[Soft feel free to flame, Mommy will follow you forever.]

On the back was a row of smaller characters: (Also hope the match goes well for Qian).

The entire arena burst out laughing, and not even the commentators were able to hold back.

The people on stage also saw it.

Xiao Bai was dying from laughter. “Qian-*ge*, is this the reason why sister-in-law wanted a ticket from you??”

“Yep.” Yuan Qian also chuckled. “She also sent a gift when Xiao Rong was streaming the other day.”

But Jian Rong wasn’t able to laugh.

There were a few other people sitting near Youyou who were also there to show support for Jian Rong. A picture of him wearing rabbit ears was printed on their support banners, accompanied by the text: “*Bunny-eared sweetheart big troll.*”

At the very least there were three filters layered on top of his picture. At first glance, Jian Rong almost didn’t recognize himself.

He quickly retracted his gaze. “Does this count as infringing on my portrait rights?”

“Probably not? My *ge*’s support banners often have photos of him on them.” Xiao Bai curiously asked, “Oh right, just now XIU said that you and Savior played against each other in ranked before? When did that happen ah.”

Jian Rong: “I’ve played a few games against him, don’t remember when anymore.”

“Did you win or lose?” Xiao Bai questioned.

“Won.”

“Hell yeah!” Xiao Bai complimented wildly, “No wonder he still remembers you, tsk, our mid laner is a true bargain deal. Savior’s signing fee seemed to be several times the amount yours was… this contract is really your loss.”

Jian Rong gave an “en.” “My value will go up next season.”

Ding-*ge* smacked both of them on the head with his notebook. “Don’t talk about this stuff at the competition stadium!”

After everyone finished checking their equipment, the match quickly entered the pick/ban phase.

Both teams’ ban lists were more or less the same as they had been during their practice matches. Fighting Tiger had the first pick, and they locked in Twisted Fate.

“Xiao Rong, what do you wanna play?” Yuan Qian asked.

Since his throat was parched, Lu Boyuan twisted open a bottle of spring water. He had just taken a sip when he heard Jian Rong say in his headphones: “Fizz.”

“This thing is really something in terms of mana consumption and lane pushing. If you pick him, don’t even think about touching their mid lane tower in the early game.” Ding-*ge* confirmed, “You genuinely want to play him? The reason?”

“He can suppress Twisted Fate in the lane.” Jian Rong paused. “Want to finish as soon as possible.”

Ding-*ge* was still hesitant. He asked, “Xiao Lu, what do you think?”

Lu Boyuan placed the bottle of water back down in its original position, and his voice, which had been moistened by the water, was a bit raspy. “Fighting Tiger’s competitive state is different from the way they act during practice matches. If you think you can do it, then pick him.”

Jian Rong had never once thought that he couldn’t do it before.

After Lu Boyuan said that, Yuan Qian instantly helped Jian Rong lock in Fizz.

As the second pick, Lu Boyuan discussed with Ding-*ge* and decided to choose the jack of all trades jungler, Trundle. Fizz already dealt enough damage, so they needed a tankier front line.

By the time the other team finished picking their remaining champions, Fighting Tiger’s strategy was already extremely obvious.

Twisted Fate, Shen, Nocturne, Ashe, and Tahm Kench.

Pine adjusted his runes. “They’re using a global support flow strategy this game.”

Twisted Fate had a teleportation ult that could transport him to any target location, while Nocturne had an ult that allowed him to dash to an enemy within a huge range. In addition, Shen could directly blink to an ally’s location. The combination of these three champions together was basically the legendary saying—with the firing of a signal flare, an army ten thousand strong will be there.

This kind of strategy targeted the bot lane the most.

After they picked their champions, Ding-*ge* warned before going off stage, “Bot lane, be careful, it’s best if you don’t fight in the early game.”

One minute later, the match officially began.

Jian Rong and Da Niu had laned against each other countless times by now in practice matches and ranked games. He hadn’t picked Fizz out of arrogance; Jian Rong had solo killed Da Niu numerous times in practice matches before.

But by the time this game was five minutes in, Jian Rong sensed that something wasn’t right—Da Niu wasn’t fighting with him at all.

Not only was he not fighting with Jian Rong, he was even clearing minions using only his Q skill. As long as Jian Rong’s blink and CC skills were still on

hand, Da Niu wouldn't take a single step forward, even at the cost of not eating the minions at the back.

"This… Twisted Fate, isn't he a bit too stable? He would rather not kill minions than give Soft a chance to hit him?" Commentator A answered his own question. "However, this can also be considered one of Fighting Tiger's strategies, right. Not making any mistakes whatsoever in the early game, and gaining dominance in the mid-late game by relying on team fight coordination."

"Indeed, that strategy became very clear the moment they chose a support flow team composition." Commentator B chuckled. "The only thing is… I'm afraid that player Soft will be stifled this round."

Jian Rong really did feel very stifled.

Could this be called laning? This was called clearing minions. Twisted Fate didn't approach him to fight him, and adding on the fact that Twisted Fate's waveclear ability was strong, after Jian Rong finally managed to shove the wave over to the other side's tower, he wasn't even able to touch the enemy turret. By the time he reached level 6, he had only landed one hit on Twisted Fate.

In this kind of match, everyone was just farming on their own in the early game, and there were no exciting moments. The commentators also sounded quite calm.

"Level 7 now, Twisted Fate is finally recalling back to base after clearing all the minions. This is his first time going back to base in this game, Da Niu is

currently half a level behind Soft's, but I don't think that'll be a big problem… oh?!" Spotting Twisted Fate's movement, Commentator A's voice finally changed. "Da Niu is going to the bot lane! This means they're about to begin—TTC's bot lane hasn't noticed anything yet, both sides are still peacefully waveclearing. To tell the truth, this positioning is a bit dangerous… he's here!"

Right after Jian Rong said, "Twisted Fate disappeared," his game screen suddenly went dark—it was the enemy jungler Nocturne's nearsighting ult.

Within three seconds, all five members of Fighting Tiger gathered at the bot lane.

"Shit shit shit shit!" Xiao Bai frantically ran for his life. "I only fucking took one extra look at their support! Just one!! Is this fucking necessary?! … fucking hell they're also going to push the tower!!"

"I'm here." Lu Boyuan had a faint suspicion for a while now that the other side was going to come push the bot lane, so he had been waiting in the lower half of the jungle the entire time. Seeing it happen, he decisively abandoned the two little Krugs and headed towards the bot lane to provide assistance.

Even though Jian Rong had purchased boots, he still arrived late. When he got to the bot lane, Xiao Bai and Pine had already died, and Lu Boyuan managed to kill the enemy support with difficulty. He only had a sliver of health left, and he was in a very bad state.

Jian Rong didn't even think about it before he flashed and used his ult—just as his ult was about to hit Fighting Tiger's ADC Luoluo, the enemy support, playing Tahm Kench, swallowed Luoluo whole into his champion's stomach. He then blinked away and dodged Jian Rong's ult completely before he fled without looking back.

This time, Jian Rong's assist achieved nothing. By the time he returned to the mid lane, Twisted Fate had already finished clearing a wave of minions, evening out the gap in their levels.

The first mini team fight established the rhythm of the entire game.

Even with the advantage, Fighting Tiger wasn't reckless; they would draw back if no teammates were coming to assist. After Twisted Fate finished clearing all the mid lane minions, he went to eat the little monsters nearby. Within the span of a minute, Jian Rong incurred quite a few 'misses,' causing his teammates in the top and bot lanes to feel alarmed.

Ten minutes in, three members of Fighting Tiger appeared simultaneously at the top lane. They were truly able to coordinate way too well with each other, as they were even able to divide the damage from pushing the tower very thoroughly. Before Jian Rong could reach the top lane, he received the game notification that his teammate had died.

Fifteen minutes in, Jian Rong found an opportunity and was about to solo kill Da Niu when Fighting Tiger's top laner, playing Shen, used his ult and came down to assist. At the same time, their support, Tahm Kench, also used his ult, with the destination being right at Jian Rong's feet… in the end, it was Lu Boyuan's timely arrival that barely managed to save Jian Rong.

“This game has already completely entered Fighting Tiger’s rhythm.” Commentator A shook his head. “Someone needs to step forward. As long as they can interrupt one of Fighting Tiger’s assists, TTC will still have a chance to make a comeback. Can God Lu do it?”

Commentator B: “God Lu can, but his champion, Trundle, can’t! You can tell that God Lu picked this champion for the sake of the front line, but TTC’s damage dealers currently still aren’t doing enough DPS. Pine keeps being ganked, and Soft’s Fizz… to tell the truth, it’s very hard for him to get a kill. Fighting Tiger has ample CC with this team composition, and their ability to protect allies is very strong. In my opinion, Soft actually shouldn’t have chosen Fizz. When facing a team like Fighting Tiger, it might have been more useful for him to pick a late game champion that can team fight.”

Thirty minutes in, a team fight finished. Three TTC players died in the battle, and Fighting Tiger went for Baron.

Just as everyone thought that the match was about to end, Lu Boyuan rushed into the pit and stole Baron before flashing away and fleeing with barely any health remaining, forcefully replenishing a wave for TTC.

Unfortunately, it was useless. Relying on Ashe and Twisted Fate, who both had outstanding waveclear abilities, Fighting Tiger strenuously delayed team fighting until TTC’s Baron buff ran out.

Forty-six minutes in, Fighting Tiger destroyed TTC’s Nexus and won the first round of the match.

When the staff member came to tell them to go offstage and wait in the break room for the second round to begin, Jian Rong was still sitting in his seat and didn't move.

This was the first game that he had ever lost while playing competitively.

It felt different from losing a ranked game. Ranked games consisted of random teammates and random opponents; the feeling of being ruthlessly suppressed by tactics wouldn't exist. In those last forty-six minutes, Jian Rong felt like every single hit of his was landing on cotton, and he had a strong sense of helplessness.

Jian Rong opened the scoreboard, wanting to see his damage output, but then someone patted his head very gently twice.

"Stand up, leave the stage first." Lu Boyuan said.

Translation Notes

1. *He says all this in English. And again, simida refers to Korean* ^

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 56: The god in every meta.

As Jian Rong took off his headphones and headed backstage, the detailed statistics from this game had already appeared on the big screen.

“En?” Commentator A was astonished. “I realized that Soft’s damage output wasn’t as low as I had imagined.”

“How else do you think this game was dragged out all the way to forty minutes? In the middle, there were quite a few team fights where he almost swept away the other side’s damage dealer.” Commentator B lamented, “Unfortunately Fighting Tiger had a Tahm Kench. Their ability to protect allies was way too strong, Soft really couldn’t cleave them down. You could tell that he was already feeling somewhat anxious at the end.”

Back at the break room, the first thing Jian Rong said was, “My fault.”

“It has nothing to do with you, I agreed and let you pick Fizz.” Ding-*ge* hastily comforted him before he said, “When playing against Fighting Tiger, it’s still best to fight strategy with strategy.”

Jian Rong didn’t nod or speak. If someone had to pinpoint the biggest problem in the last game, it would definitely be him.

In the first place, he wasn’t good at providing assistance. When he encountered opponents who were excellent at assists, this weak point became even more obvious.

But now wasn't the time for blaming himself or feeling ashamed. He still needed to go back on stage and continue competing.

Lu Boyuan leaned back against the sofa, looking at the statistics from the last game. After the camera cut to the audience, he called, "Xiao Bai."

Xiao Bai was still passionately retelling the scene of him being pursued by four people earlier. Hearing his name, he turned his head. "What's up, *ge*?"

"Take a hard CC champ next round." Lu Boyuan explained, "Jungler support duo roam."

Jungler support duo roam, as the name implied, entailed both the jungler and support roaming, driving the rhythm of the entire map. Like this, the success rate of ganking would increase drastically, and they could also gain better vision.

This strategy was quite demanding of the ADC; after all, the ADC would need to farm by himself in the bot lane.

However, luckily Pine was very capable by himself and had no problem farming alone. As a result, the second game's strategy was settled just like that.

The second game started soon after.

"I've already placed the wards. P-*baby*, be good in the bot lane~" Before leaving to gank with Lu Boyuan, Xiao Bai instructed like an old mother, "If the other support comes up to harass you—exercise patience in a moment of anger, and you will escape a hundred days of sorrow. Remember how

many times he harasses you, once I make my glorious return I'll help you get revenge."

Pine was playing Ezreal, a champion that was top-tier at escaping, so he didn't need to worry about any of that. He didn't even bother looking back as he cleared minions. "Can you hurry up and leave."

Jian Rong was playing Syndra this round, so he had ample CC and damage in the early-mid game.

The moment Lu Boyuan sent his "*on my way*" ping, Jian Rong instantly flashed and knocked back his spheres, firmly stunning the enemy mid laner on the spot. Lu Boyuan, playing Elise, fired a binding spider web and jumped over, coordinating with the CC from the ult of Xiao Bai's Leona. All the way up until his death, Da Niu wasn't able to use his flash skill.

"TTC's CC was linked way too beautifully." Commentator A couldn't help but laugh. "Da Niu probably broke his flash key from pressing it so many times."

"Indeed." Commentator B said, "However… Fighting Tiger is the best at gaining experience from their mistakes. Now that Da Niu has died once, he most likely won't be so easy to gank in the next wave."

After getting the kill, Jian Rong returned to base. Right as he left again, Lu Boyuan's voice sounded. "Jian Rong, come with me to the top lane."

There was a large wave of minions in the mid lane, which would be a huge loss if he didn't clear them. In the top lane, everything was quiet as both sides farmed peacefully, and it didn't look like anything was going to

happen. If this was a normal ranked game, Jian Rong would have probably straight up blocked his teammate.

The current Jian Rong didn't hesitate at all. He turned around and followed Lu Boyuan and Xiao Bai to the top lane—then, they caught the enemy mid laner and jungler who had circled around to gank Yuan Qian from behind.

Jian Rong had farmed better than Da Niu and he had the defensive advantage, so naturally their side won that team fight. Three people from the other team died, while they only lost a Yuan Qian.

"Three kills, but I only got an assist…" Yuan Qian said angrily, "Why is Fighting Tiger always like this? Always ganking with three people at a time, not leaving any way out, huh??"

"It's not easy for them to get Pine with Ezreal, so of course they're going after you." Lu Boyuan pressed his lips together and coughed once. "They'll probably come over again next wave, so don't push the lane. Get the Rift Herald first."

After Lu Boyuan helped his teammates successfully countergank twice, TTC's advantage gradually became obvious from the mid game onwards.

But Fighting Tiger's team fighting and coordination were as remarkable as always. They unyieldingly endured their way through three major team fights and forcefully dragged out the game to forty-nine minutes before finally making a mistake. Yuan Qian flashed in and engaged, CC-ing the enemy ADC. The remaining four people followed closely after, and after wiping out the other team, they tore down the enemy's Nexus.

The score arrived at a nerve-wracking 1:1.

Lu Boyuan left the stage calmly. Back at the break room, he sat down lazily on the sofa, hands stuffed in his pockets. He appeared to be listening to Ding-*ge* analyze the next game's pick/ban phase, but in reality, he didn't hear a single word.

A long while later, when nobody was paying attention, he lifted a hand and wiped off the cold sweat on his forehead.

The intermission period was very short. Not long after, a staff member came to tell them to go on stage.

A few minutes later, both teams returned to the stage once again.

Right as Lu Boyuan sat down, the person next to him pushed over the bottled water that Lu Boyuan had placed on the table very gently using the back of his hand.

They were forbidden from looking to the side while on stage.

Jian Rong's gaze remained fixed on his own screen as he said lowly, "During the last game, you didn't take a single sip of water."

Lu Boyuan sensed the faint pain radiating from his wrist and he replied evenly, "Not thirsty."

Actually, his throat was so dry that it almost felt like it was on fire.

But based on his previous experiences… it would best to move his wrist as little as possible.

Jian Rong frowned. “But you have a fever.”

The two of them were unaware, but their little interaction had already been captured by the camera and was being broadcasted on the big screen.

Commentator A: “Soft currently still has a lot of pressure on him, look at how his brows are furrowed.”

“After all, he was completely crushed by tactics in the first round. Anyone would feel the pressure.” Commentator B smiled. “It’s good to feel pressured, that’s the only way to improve. It seems that Soft has also already developed into a very competent pro player by now…”

The “*now*” ended up stuck in Commentator B’s throat.

On the broadcast screen, Road said something unknown, which first caused Soft to shut his mouth and stare blankly for a few seconds before he reached out… very naturally and picked up the bottled water next to Road’s keyboard.

He twisted off the lid before he put it back down on the table.

A very faint smile flitted across Road’s face before he picked up the bottle and drank a bit.

“Take another sip,” Jian Rong said. “During the match… I won’t be able to open it.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t respond, but he did pick it up and drink another mouthful.

After Road was done, Soft expressionlessly twisted the cap back onto the water bottle and set it down. They didn't interact again.

The two commentators were dumbstruck at the same time.

On the LoL streaming channel—

[????]

[My dumbass son was just viciously beaten up by Fighting Tiger, and now he's also in charge of twisting open his captain's water?]

[This is probably his punishment for being viciously beaten up, right. Not bad, I hope that God Lu properly educates this dumbass. Daddy didn't even have the heart to watch that game's Fizz.]

[Are Soft's fans for real? How come I feel like you all are pretty proud of Soft losing a game?]

[As expected, Soft is only worthy of bullying those trash teams like YY. Even against Fighting Tiger, he's like this… when they encounter PUD in the future, won't he be beaten like a dog?]

[If my son could truss up and pummel all the other teams' mid laners right after starting to play competitively, then the LPL's mid laners might as well just collectively retire now. What the hell would be the point of playing professionally?]

[I also want to help God Lu open his water bottle QAQ…]

Nobody knew what was going on. Jian Rong also didn't know what was going on. Lu Boyuan told him to twist open the lid, so he had.

The other three people in the team put on their headphones later, so they hadn't heard Lu Boyuan and Jian Rong's odd conversation.

Before Jian Rong could think about it any longer, the referee confirmed that there were no issues with the players or their equipment, and the game quickly entered the pick/ban phase.

Ding-*ge*'s expression was serious. "This round—"

Lu Boyuan interrupted, "Help me get Graves."

"?" Ding-*ge* was startled. "Against Fighting Tiger… you're picking Graves?"

Graves was a powerful jungler that required the support of a high economy. If necessary, he would even have to eat his teammates' resources—how was that any different from the Fizz that Jian Rong had used in the first game!!

Ding-*ge* crinkled his face. "I have no problem with you picking Graves when we're up against a weak team, but against Fighting Tiger… give me a reason."

Lu Boyuan: "Finish as soon as possible."

Ding-*ge*: "……"

So you're not even changing the damn script, huh.

“Ah?” Commentator A was stunned. “TTC locked in Graves? They’re going to use Graves against Fighting Tiger? Wouldn’t it be better to use a champion like Rek’Sai?”

“I’ve discovered that our LPL players just like to play Graves, he’s been picked many times already during this spring season… but this champion’s win rate is actually extremely low. From the beginning of the season till now, Graves has only won two games—and both times with Road too.” Commentator B was puzzled. “But Fighting Tiger is a team that’s above average in terms of coordination and operations. Choosing Graves… if he doesn’t perform well, it’ll be very easy for him to become Fizz from the first game.”

After they finished picking champions, Qian switched Graves over to Road.

The last second before they entered the game, Lu Boyuan nudged his mouse and changed the Flash skill into Ignite.

The other four people: “?”

The commentators: “??”

The audience: “????”

Ding-*ge*, who just went offstage: “???????”

Flash could be considered the most important summoner spell in LoL. It allowed the user to move forward a short distance, and it was an exceptionally effective skill for fleeing, pursuing, and dodging.

All the way up until the game began, the two commentators were still in shock.

Commentator A: "No Flash, but… Ignite?"

"If it weren't for Road changing it at the last minute, I would've thought that he brought the wrong spell…" Commentator B was stunned. "I'm a little confused by this match."

Commentator A said hesitantly, "Perhaps it's a new strategy created by TTC's coaches?"

Ding-*ge* watched the broadcast expressionlessly and thought, *Like hell it's a new strategy*.

Xiao Bai also thought that Lu Boyuan had picked the wrong spell. He cleared his throat and reminded him in a small voice, "*Ge*, this Ignite Graves of yours is quite fashionable, hah."

Lu Boyuan: "Mn."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Jian Rong opened the scoreboard and glanced at Lu Boyuan's skills. He pursed his lips and swallowed down his questions.

Just as everyone was lost in confusion, Graves reached level 4. Then, he snuck into the enemy's jungle, carrying his shotgun.

Lu Boyuan's movement and trajectory were spotted by the ward that Fighting Tiger's jungler had placed next to the river. In their voice chat, the

enemy jungler promptly called for their team's mid laner to come over.

Commentator A watched with deep concern. "It's over, he was discovered."

Commentator B: "It's fine, Soft and Qian are also rushing over to provide assistance."

"Their mid laner went over." Jian Rong swiftly reported the position before he decisively abandoned the minions in front of him and headed towards the jungle. "I'll be there soon."

Yuan Qian glanced at the minimap. "I'm coming too."

Lu Boyuan already found the enemy jungler's position, and he said calmly, "No need, you two stay and clear minions."

Jian Rong was startled. His mouse swayed hesitantly on his screen for a few seconds before he finally turned back around obediently.

"Soft isn't going anymore??" Commentator A was dumbfounded. "I can't really understand this teammate sacrificing play…"

Before he could finish speaking, he saw Lu Boyuan accurately locate the enemy jungler, Trundle, who still had 60% health remaining and was standing near the Krugs next to the top lane.

Knowing that his teammate was on his way over, Fighting Tiger's jungler didn't back off either. He approached with the intention of fighting it out with Lu Boyuan, but then—

Graves tossed out his Smoke Screen skill at the enemy jungler's feet, followed by a simple auto-attack, Ignite, and then another auto-attack, successfully triggering Phase Rush[1]. A damage combo instantly stupefied Fighting Tiger's jungler.

Fighting Tiger's jungler looked at his little remaining health and firmly used his Flash. Graves used his E skill and dashed forward before the detonation sound of his Q skill sounded in his headphones. Fighting Tiger's jungler watched helplessly as the Ignite symbol hanging over his head burned away the last sliver of his health—

"First blood!"

The whole combo added together didn't take longer than ten seconds.

Da Niu hurried over just in time to see his teammate collapse. He glanced at Lu Boyuan's health bar, which had over half remaining, and his double buffs… before he resolutely turned around and ran away.

"Beautiful!!" Commentator A shouted. "Road was very decisive in using those skills! He definitely calculated out his entire damage output in advance!"

Commentator B nodded. "Burned to death by Ignite, this Ignite was an extremely crucial choice…"

"Ignite did indeed prove crucial for this wave, but without Flash, it's actually still quite difficult to team fight and gank in the mid-late game." Commentator A calmed down a little. "Let's see what happens."

In PUD's break room, after the first blood notification, XIU clicked his tongue and shook his head. He picked up his bag and said, "Let's go back."

Savior was bewildered. "Not watching?"

XIU chuckled. "There's no point… I've counted before. From last year's spring season till now, he's never lost a single game in which he's gotten first blood while playing Graves."

Those who could play Graves were the overlords of the jungle in the early game. And if this champion fell into someone like Road's hands, whose game awareness was extremely high, and he was allowed to get first blood while taking Ignite…

Hopefully Fighting Tiger's jungler would be all right.

Ten minutes later, Fighting Tiger's jungler was being chased by Lu Boyuan for the nth time in his own jungle.

"Did God Lu stick a ward in our jungle?" Fighting Tiger's jungler felt weak from fury. "It's one thing if he ganks me while I'm on my way somewhere, but he's even waiting for me next to my monsters??"

Da Niu's eyebrows were knitted tightly together. "Don't run, I'm here. Counter him, don't let him farm any longer."

A moment later, another person was added to Lu Boyuan's pursuit list.

Fighting Tiger's mid laner and jungler were chased by Graves all the way from the blue buff to their own mid tower. After they were finally about to

escape, Jian Rong, playing Azir, suddenly flashed up and used his ult—knocking the two of them back in front of Lu Boyuan.

“Double kill!”

“My goodness… Graves is chasing two people and fighting them by himself?!” Commentator A spluttered with excitement. “Right now, Road is one level ahead of Da Niu and two levels ahead of the enemy jungler! Road’s rhythm is truly way too terrifying, Fighting Tiger doesn’t have any ability to resist at all!”

At level 12, Graves went to the bot lane to gank Fighting Tiger’s ADC Luoluo.

With one explosive shot, half his health crumbled away.

Luoluo: “?”

Was this damage real??

The disparity in their items and levels was way, way, way too large, to the point that every time Lu Boyuan walked towards Luoluo later, the commentators would all howl—

Commentator A: “Luoluo run for it!!!”

Commentator B: “He can’t escape, Luoluo might as well take both hands off the keyboard now.”

“Just… what in the world is this…” Commentator A pondered deeply as he watched Graves destroy the enemy ADC in three shots. “Don’t they say

there's only one god per meta? Graves isn't strong in this meta either ah…"

"Road has been the god of how many metas now, you should be used to it." Commentator B smiled. "This game has made all the teams realize that next time when they encounter God Lu again, they should either choose a powerful champion and go all out against him, or they should ban Graves and be done with it."

Commentator A: "Speaking of which, it's been a long time since we've last seen Road's Lee Sin. That can truly be called the god in every meta… I'm getting sidetracked. Having said that, I've discovered a very intriguing fact."

Commentator B lifted an eyebrow. "What is it?"

Commentator A: "In this game, Road pilfered gold from his top lane and stole experience from his bot lane… the only lane in which he hasn't touched a single minion is the mid lane."

Twenty-five minutes in, Fighting Tiger decided to put everything on the line. Taking advantage of the interval during which TTC's top and bot laners recalled to base after getting a dragon, Fighting Tiger went to steal Baron.

Instantly, the commentators grew excited again—the ward that TTC had placed near Baron had just run out a few seconds earlier.

"It's possible it's possible!" Commentator A said animatedly. "With this team comp, it won't take too long for Fighting Tiger to get Baron… *ss*, it's over."

They watched as Lu Boyuan, who had just finished clearing a wave of minions in the mid lane, suddenly stopped in the middle of returning to base. Then, he crept towards the dark expanse where Baron was located—

Right as Fighting Tiger was totally immersed in stealing Baron, a despair-inducing ward was inserted into the pit with a *thunk*.

Da Niu clenched his teeth. “Keep going, three people from their team went back to base. We have five people here, Road won’t dare to come down.”

Indeed, Lu Boyuan didn’t go down.

Because Jian Rong charged in from the side, poked twice to steal Baron away, and then flashed and escaped.

“……too cruel.” Commentator A wore a complicated expression, and he held back his profanity. “This is even worse than if the two of them had rushed in and wiped out all of Fighting Tiger.”

Twenty-eight minutes in, TTC grouped up and went for Fighting Tiger’s base, obtaining victory after destroying the enemy’s Nexus.

The first two rounds were both bitter struggles, but this game ended up being an overwhelming victory for TTC. After the game finished, many audience members present at the stadium still hadn’t fully recovered yet.

When Jian Rong took off his headphones, he just happened to hear Commentator A’s roar—

“Let us all congratulate TTC! 2:1! Successfully winning this spring season match!”

If someone didn’t know better, they would think that the finals had just taken place, based on the volume of the commentator’s voice.

Jian Rong rubbed his ears and was about to stand up when he turned his head and realized that Lu Boyuan was still sitting, unmoving, in his original position. Even his hands were still placed on his keyboard and mouse.

Jian Rong could faintly sense that something was wrong. “What’s the matter?”

Lu Boyuan endured the pain in his head and exhaled very lightly.

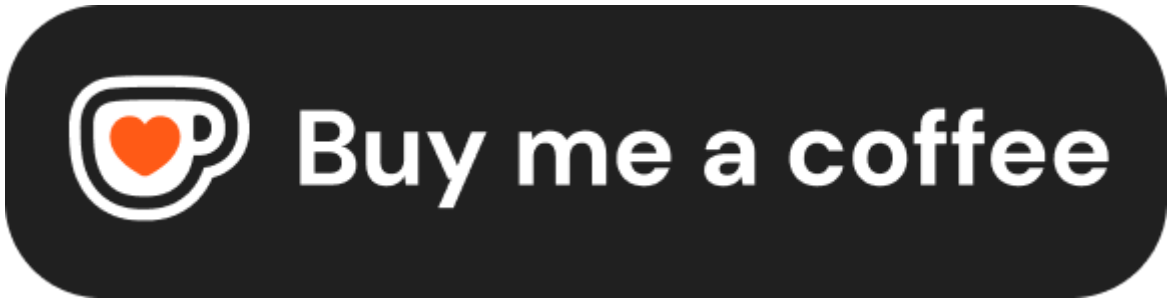
His lipstick had already rubbed off, revealing the pallid color of his lips.

“Nothing. Played for too long, a bit tired.” A few seconds later, Lu Boyuan finally moved his hands off his equipment. He stood up and said hoarsely, “Let’s go and shake hands.”

Translation Notes

1. *Phase Rush is a rune that generates a movement buff when stacking 3 skills (more or less) on a target within 4 seconds* ^

Wei: God Lu is truly a god… but he needs to rest!! Take care of your man so he gets better soon JR!!



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ICDI Chapter 57: No way no way, there's still someone who doesn't have God Lu's championship skin??

Thank you to Aryab for the Ko-fi!

Jian Rong snapped out of it only when Lu Boyuan had already walked down the steps that led up to their seats and turned to look back at him questioningly.

He saw that Lu Boyuan was almost imperceptibly opening and closing his right hand. Jian Rong also liked to do that when his own hands felt tired.

Jian Rong set his headphones down on the table before he stood up and followed Lu Boyuan to go shake hands.

The handshake was a very short segment of the competition. The winners used it to show off, while the losing team wasn't in the mood to talk at all.

Fighting Tiger's players were evidently different from normal people.

The first few members weren't too bad; at the most, they just said '*God Lu is awesome*.' But once they reached Fighting Tiger's Da Niu…

Ah-Niu smiled. "Your Ignite Graves is awesome."

Lu Boyuan said, "It's alright."

“Our coach finally managed to get our jungler to drop his bad habit of picking Graves. After this match, he’ll probably pick it back up again.” Ah-Niu sighed. “Next time we meet, we’ll definitely crush you in the early game.”

Lu Boyuan’s tone was mostly emotionless. “You won’t be able to.”

Ah-Niu laughed heartily and was about to say something else when he suddenly sensed a somewhat unfriendly gaze come from behind Lu Boyuan.

The other three TTC members were all ahead of Lu Boyuan, so there was only one person trailing after him.

Jian Rong glared at the hands that the two people in front of him had been shaking for quite a while. The more he looked, the deeper his eyebrows furrowed, and he urged coldly, “Can you hurry it up?”

Ah-Niu: “…”

Once the handshakes concluded, the players tidied up their equipment and went offstage.

Xiao Bai dismantled his keyboard. “It felt so great being carried in that last game. How about we have a one-shot Graves in every game from now on?”

Pine said, “You were being carried, but I wasn’t. My score was 3/0/3.”

“Captain, you’re okay, right?” Yuan Qian tilted his head and asked, “You played very urgently in that final round, is it because…”

Yuan Qian's words reminded the other two people. Xiao Bai and Pine simultaneously stopped moving to look at Lu Boyuan.

"Mn." Lu Boyuan unplugged the keyboard from the USB port. "Feeling sleepy, wanted to finish faster so I can go back and rest."

Xiao Bai wanted to ask something else, but then Jian Rong, who was silently packing up his own equipment the entire time, stood and picked up the keyboard from Lu Boyuan's table. He then carefully coiled the keyboard's cable.

Jian Rong said, "I'll help bring it down for you."

Lu Boyuan glanced at him. "Okay."

The other three people looked at their team's mid laner and jungler in confusion.

The commentators and spectators were also baffled.

[It's settled: Soft is being bullied in the team.]

[Isn't Soft being way too eager? Doesn't he know that other people aren't allowed to touch a pro gamer's keyboard??]

[Above, where'd you get brainwashed like that? The auntie at TTC's base occasionally helps them clean their keyboards, I saw it in Xiao Bai's stream.]

[Is Soft trying to curry favor with Road? This kind of thing happens even within professional teams?? *Ai*, as expected, pro players who originated from livestreaming are quite self-centered.]

[Even for competitive gaming, you're judging a player's origin? In that case, I have no choice but to debate properly with you. Before my dumb oldest son joined the team, he was at minimum a millionaire, and he reached Challenger rank four in the Korean server before his streaming took off. If he wasn't in the top ten on StarTV's LoL streamer ranking, then he was at least in the top twenty. Out of the entire pro league, how many players can you find who have a better background than he does??]

[Argument aside, there's something I have to clarify. What my son is doing isn't called currying favor, it's called expressing love.]

When the comment about "*expressing love*" swept by, the competition camera just happened to focus on Jian Rong's figure from behind.

He held both pieces of equipment in his arms and went offstage without bothering to look back.

"You guys worked hard and played pretty well." Ding-*ge* was waiting for them at the backstage entrance. After he finished praising the top and bot laners, Ding-*ge* tugged aside Lu Boyuan.

He lowered his voice. "Did your hand start hurting again?!"

Ever since Lu Boyuan requested Graves, Ding-*ge* felt like something wasn't right, but he was worried that voicing his concern would affect the other members' conditions, so he held back on stage and hadn't asked anything.

While the game was loading, the camera had given Lu Boyuan a solo shot. When Ding-*ge* saw Lu Boyuan slightly twitch his fingers, his worries were confirmed almost instantaneously.

Lu Boyuan knew that there was no point in hiding it from Ding-*ge*, which would only make him overthink it more and more. As a result, Lu Boyuan replied quietly, "A bit. I slept on my hand last night, it was already numb when I woke up."

Ding-*ge* pulled out his phone and said, "I'll tell the acupuncturist to come to the base. Let me go talk to the competition officials, someone else from the team can go do the post-match interview."

Lu Boyuan asked, "Am I not the MVP?"

Ding-*ge* didn't even think about it. "Of course you are."

Behind them, Jian Rong came offstage, carrying the keyboards. Lu Boyuan spotted him from the corner of his eye, and his voice lowered a little more. He said quickly, "Then I'll go. It's only a few minutes, it won't interfere with anything."

On stage, the two commentators had just started the "*analyzing this match's MVP*" process.

Commentator A: "There… shouldn't be any need to guess who it is, right?"

"Indeed." After responding, Commentator B also chuckled. "If this match consisted only of the first two rounds, perhaps we would still need to guess. After all, in the second game, Pine's solo lane was very stable, and he didn't fall behind in terms of CS at all; Xiao Bai placed his wards very precisely when he was roaming with the jungler, and his awareness was also quite good; in the late game, Qian-*ge* engaged the team fights extremely beautifully. But in the third game… it was entirely God Lu's individual

showcase ah. Aside from the instant Soft stole Baron, I was watching God Lu the entire time."

Right as he said that, the MVP was swiftly displayed on the big screen. Lu Boyuan's headshot emerged on the right side of the screen, and he appeared cool and indifferent in the photo. Next to him was Graves' astonishing score of 8/0/6.

Just as Jian Rong finished putting Lu Boyuan's keyboard back into the equipment bag, the post-match interview began.

Xiao Bai sniffled as he looked at the TV. "I've never seen my *ge* in such poor health before."

"He just hasn't been sick in a really long time." Ding-*ge* sighed. "I should've told him to put on some lipstick before going up."

The one in charge of today's interview was a male host. He was a familiar face and was very fond of asking questions unrelated to the match at the end of the interview. Since the audience responded positively to it, the LPL didn't stop him from doing so.

At first, the host asked the same old conventional questions, which Lu Boyuan also answered very standardly.

A few questions later, the host couldn't help but ask, "God Lu, what happened to your voice? Are you feeling unwell?"

Lu Boyuan: "I've caught a little cold."

“Outside of practice, you still have to pay attention to your health ah,” the host advised briefly out of concern before he continued. “Actually, the first two rounds of today’s match were extremely deadlocked, as it seems the newcomer still isn’t very used to slower-paced games. Fortunately, you stepped forward in the third round, catching Fighting Tiger off guard with your fast-paced Graves, and the audience must have also felt very excited when watching. I want to ask… the moment you chose Graves, were you already prepared to carry the entire team?”

Lu Boyuan: “Before going on stage, every player must be prepared to carry the team.”

The person who normally never said much during interviews was currently looking into the camera, and he said slowly, “But every team works differently. No player in the pro league would dare say that they can carry every single match, so they have to try and rely on their teammates during such a time. Today, I was the one who stepped forward, but tomorrow it might be Soft, Pine, Qian, or Xiao Bai.”

Jian Rong jolted slightly, and his fists, which he had clenched tightly after hearing “*the newcomer isn’t used to it*,” loosened a bit.

“Correct, God Lu is right.” The male host, who spent his time wildly surfing the internet, smiled and nodded. “Then, before this interview ends, I still have one personal question. Your team’s new mid laner’s recent crossdressing stream… God Lu, what are your thoughts on it?”

Jian Rong’s fists clenched again.

Lu Boyuan was quiet for two seconds. “Better than other people’s streams.”

After the interview concluded, everyone in TTC got in the bus to go back to the base.

Jian Rong realized only after getting in the bus that the female streamer who the camera had focused on earlier, Youyou, was also in the car with them.

“I just want to give Yuan Qian a few things, I’ll be at your base for ten minutes and then I’ll go.” Youyou blinked in their direction. “If you guys have an issue with it, I don’t have to enter the base either.”

She said “*you guys*,” but she was looking at Jian Rong. Youyou had come over to the base several times before and hadn’t affected their training, so obviously the others had no objections.

Jian Rong shrugged, indicating his indifference.

This female streamer was just holding up a support banner for him a moment ago, and Jian Rong didn’t know how to interact appropriately with her. As a result, he avoided her eyes the entire time he made his way over to his seat.

Youyou noticed that, and she couldn’t help but start a conversation with him. “Soft, don’t feel uncomfortable, you can just treat me like your average dad… average water friend.”

Yuan Qian burst out laughing. “Why are you teasing him… Xiao Rong, ignore her, she always has too much to say.”

Seeing Lu Boyuan and Ding-*ge* get on the bus together, Jian Rong didn't even look back at Yuan Qian and Youyou; he hummed ambiguously in response and that was that.

Lu Boyuan passed by the front few rows and casually replied to a few of Ding-*ge*'s comments before he sat down very naturally next to Jian Rong.

Lu Boyuan's eyelids felt extremely heavy, so he closed his eyes and rested the whole drive back to the base. Only when the bus came to a solid stop in front of the base entrance did he suddenly remember something, and he opened his eyes and turned his head to ask, "What about the medicine?"

Jian Rong: "Ding-*ge* said not to take it for now, he'll give it to you after the doctor comes to the base and finishes your checkup."

Lu Boyuan nodded and didn't say anything else.

The doctor was already waiting in the living room. Right after they walked into the base, Lu Boyuan went into an unused meeting room with the doctor.

After eating dinner and showering, it was already eleven PM at night. Jian Rong stood on the second floor staircase and glanced at the tightly closed door of the meeting room before he swiftly slipped into the practice room.

Today's match was too exhausting, so the others went to rest after playing a few ranked games. Only Jian Rong continued on by himself.

His phone suddenly chimed right as he finished some ranked games. It was a text from his bank; his income from the day he resumed streaming had

entered his account.

Jian Rong stared at the specific sum for a while before he unhesitatingly opened the streaming platform.

[One AM? What kind of otherworldly streaming time is this??]

[Daring to stream right after finishing a match, are you looking to be insulted?]

[Awake now? I just watched you sleepwalk your way through a game with Fizz.]

[I'm here, let me get a number for my place in line while I think about what I should flame you for today.]

"Why stream? …in any case, I'll be playing ranked, so I might as well stream to pass the time and see if I can trick out some gift money from you all." Jian Rong entered the solo queue and took the time to check the barrage. "Daring to stream after playing so terribly in the competition… I didn't play well today, that's true, I'll work harder next time. Since I played terribly, I'll allow you all to insult me a bit, I won't block anyone. Cherish this opportunity, after all, who knows if it'll ever happen again.

"The main thing is that I didn't give any notice before I started streaming, so the room mods were arranged at the last minute. It's already this late, I won't trouble them and make them work. Flame away."

Jian Rong was the only person from TTC streaming tonight, so some other fans also ended up coming to his livestream room.

[Ahhh, please tell me, how is Road doing??]

[His face was quite pale today in the interview, is he feeling sick?]

[Begging Soft to give us some reassurance… TAT]

Jian Rong took a glance at the barrage helper. “Low fever.”

[Then how is he now? Did he take medicine and go to sleep? If it’s serious, he should still go to the hospital!!]

Jian Rong didn’t answer.

Because he himself didn’t know either.

The doctor only left half an hour ago. Lu Boyuan had gone upstairs back to his room, and his footsteps were no different from how they usually sounded.

At the time, Jian Rong was in a team fight. Once he was finished with the team fight, he wanted to send a message and ask, but he was also afraid that Lu Boyuan had already gone to sleep.

This practice session of Jian Rong’s lasted all the way until four in the morning.

A new game began, and Jian Rong filled in as jungler. Without hesitation, he locked in Lee Sin.

Jian Rong: “Do I know how to play Lee Sin? …there are no champions I don’t know how to play.”

He merely wasn't as skilled at some of them.

Actually, there were other jungler champions that he was better at, but the reason why he picked Lee Sin… was because he wanted to use Lu Boyuan's championship skin.

The year that Lu Boyuan won the World Championship, the champion that he requested a skin for was Lee Sin.

After selecting his champion, the first thing Jian Rong went to do was change the skin, only to discover that Lu Boyuan's championship skin was locked…

[No way no way, there's still someone who doesn't have God Lu's championship skin??]

[On behalf of God Lu fans, I revoke this dumbass' fan membership.]

Without the championship skin, Jian Rong didn't even feel like choosing another option. "I created this account late, so I wasn't able to buy it."

[But don't you frequently play on this account nowadays?]

[If you weren't able to buy it, then go pull it!!]

"Pull?" Jian Rong paused. "Is there a lottery event going on right now?"

[Yes, there's a link to the event on the home page.]

Jian Rong instantly quit the match.

Upon seeing the question marks on the screen, Jian Rong explained, “No skin, don’t want to play.”

[…as if you have a lot of skins in the first place.]

Indeed, Jian Rong didn’t have many skins. He didn’t really care about all that; usually when playing, he would use a skin if he had it, but if he didn’t have it he would just use the original model.

But Lee Sin was different.

He opened the event on the home page and glanced over the rules. Then… he deposited 100 yuan[1] into his account.

[????]

[100 yuan, aren’t you being way too freaking luxurious??]

[I just watched Kongkong finish pulling the Lee Sin skin on his side account tonight, he deposited 2,000 yuan[2] at a time.]

“If you deposit that much, what if you get it on the first try?” Jian Rong scanned his QR code and paid. “Tencent, don’t even think about earning a single extra yuan off of me.”

He didn’t get it on the first try.

Or the second try.

Or the third try.

…

By the time Jian Rong was scanning his QR code for the 55th time, the barrage was already covered with "*hahahaha*."

[Never mind the Lee Sin skin, 5,500 yuan only got you a few of the trashiest Snowdown and Lunar Revel skins, you should just quit the game.]

[Will watching his stream cause his bad luck to spread? If so I'll be leaving first.]

With the next ten pulls, Jian Rong got eight skin shards[3].

Jian Rong was invigorated by his anger. "It's probably because my pulling posture is wrong, wait a moment, let me play a song."

The song started. Jian Rong deposited more money before he stood up. "Forget it, I'm going to wash my face again… and wash my hands too. Hold on."

…

Throat so dry that it was burning, Lu Boyuan opened his eyes in the darkness and subconsciously glanced at the time.

He swallowed a few times, but his throat still felt uncomfortable. He randomly draped a jacket over his shoulders and got up to go downstairs and get some water.

When Lu Boyuan passed by the second floor and saw that light was coming from the practice room, he stopped in the middle of going down the stairs.

Only one computer was lit up in the practice room. It was streaming, and the barrage on the screen rolled by at light speed.

[Dammit dumbass, you didn't turn off this song before you left????]

[Shit, it's four in the morning, this dumbass forcibly woke me right up with the noise.]

[My speakers were on when I entered the stream, now my neighbors are knocking on my door and asking me when I'm going to die.]

The moment half of Lu Boyuan's body entered the camera, the barrage froze for half a second.

He opened Jian Rong's match history and looked over it: starting from eleven at night, all the way to four in the morning, the entire page was green.

Amidst countless "?", Lu Boyuan picked up Jian Rong's headphones and slowly brought them up to his ear.

The jubilant, passionate chorus of a song radiated outwards—

"Good luck is here[4]~ good luck to you~ good luck brings joy and love~ good luck, our good luck is here~ welcoming good luck, may it flourish across the world~"

Lu Boyuan: "…"

Translation Notes

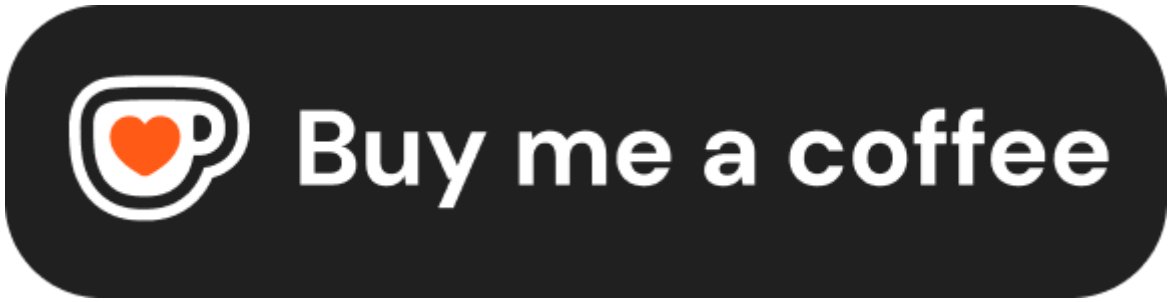
1. *About $15* ^
2. *About $300* ^
3. *Skin shards unlock skins but you have to purchase them to use them (using the skin shard only allows you to "rent" the skin for seven days)* ^
4. *This song. It's like one of the iconic Chinese New Year songs. Hahaha JR is honestly such an icon, tbh I feel like this song would lowkey slap at four AM* ^

Yan: JR pulling for LBY's skin was literally me pulling for Zhongli in Genshin Impact lmaooo I feel your pain my son...

Also, as of today the raws for ICDI are *officially complete*, at 134 chapters! This means we are almost halfway done with the translation~

If anyone would like to leave the author a supportive comment, you can find the novel here. You do need an account to comment, and if anyone would like a more in-depth explanation on how to comment/navigate JJWXC, lmk lol I can pull something together. Jiang Zi Bei has really gone through it with this novel, especially near the end. For some reason people kept getting super pressed over the author not updating daily ☹ so I'm sure any support would be much appreciated!

EDIT: an example of a comment could be "完结撒花", which means 'scattering flowers for finishing'! A quick and easy congratulatory phrase ☺



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ICDI Chapter 58: Is the little dumbass trying to pull a skin? No, he's pulling Road's heart!

Thanks to ringo for the Ko-fi!

Lu Boyuan was shocked awake by the song.

He paused momentarily while holding the headphones before he sat down in front of the computer screen full of barrage comments.

"Where is he." Lu Boyuan's voice was even more hoarse than it had been during the interview.

[Ahhhh husband TAT!!!]

[Thank you to the heavens and earth and god for making me open StarTV at 4 AM!]

[When I saw that God Lu was still this handsome despite his hair being so damn messy, I couldn't help but get out of bed and check myself out in the mirror. Now I've done it, I'm so ugly I can't fall back asleep.]

[Dunno, he said he went to wash his hands, he probably got snatched away by a ghost in the bathroom.]

[God Lu, are you feeling better? Soft said you had a low fever… judging from your complexion, you seem to have recovered a bit?]

[Husband how'd your eyes become monolids, you're even more handsome now 555[1]]

Lu Boyuan narrowed his eyes and read the barrage for a while.

Most likely to prevent sleepiness, Jian Rong had turned up the brightness very high on his monitor.

Lu Boyuan lifted a hand and adjusted the monitor to a suitable brightness before he answered a random comment, "The fever went down, don't worry."

Jian Rong's computer desktop was very chaotic. The LoL client, stream barrage helper, LoL lottery window, and music software were all open at the same time, layered atop one another; it was enough to make someone dizzy looking at it.

Lu Boyuan glanced over the lottery interface before he opened the inventory.

After drawing from a LoL web event, you still had to go to your inventory and accept the skins in order for them to actually be sent to your game account. Because Jian Rong wasn't able to pull the one that he wanted, he hadn't accepted a single skin.

Seeing the excessive number of pages for the available skins, Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow in surprise.

Jian Rong didn't like squandering money, and he basically never bought any of the newly released skins. Even when he occasionally ordered takeout,

it would always be the simplest set meal, let alone spending money on pulling skins.

Every time Xiao Bai duo queued with Jian Rong, he would roast Jian Rong for being contradictory; Jian Rong was reluctant to even buy a 45 yuan skin, but he was more than happy to smash a hundred thousand yuan of gifts on Lu Boyuan. When Jian Rong was in a good mood, he would insult him back a bit. If he was in a bad mood, he would abandon Xiao Bai and go solo queue on his own.

Lu Boyuan's thoughts were getting sidetracked. He snapped out of it and roughly calculated how many skins Jian Rong had pulled altogether.

With the total amount of skins… it probably cost at least three to five thousand yuan.

Players who participated in this kind of lottery event usually had their own goals in mind.

Lu Boyuan glanced at the prize pool and asked, "What does he want to pull?"

[Do you even need to ask? Of course it's your TTC Lee Sin.]

[TTC Lee Sin.]

[TTC Lee Sin.]

TTC Lee Sin was the name of Lu Boyuan's championship skin.

Lu Boyuan leaned back in Jian Rong's chair and nodded. "But this skin… doesn't it come back every year?"

Sets of skins that came out in previous years would come back and be purchasable for a limited amount of time in the current year. For example, near the Christmas season, "Snowdown Showdown" skins would return for sale; during Valentine's Day, "Valentine's Day" skins would go on sale again —likewise, every year around Worlds, all the championship skins from the previous years would be available for a limited time.

[Oh that's right…… it's over, I got too into watching the little dumbass pull skins, forgot to remind him.]

[It's only February right now, how long would you have to wait for them to go back on sale? What my son has is money, anything he can resolve by spending money, he definitely won't delay it until the second half of the year!]

[It's over it's over, I'm the person who told him to go pull in the lottery. I didn't think that he wouldn't be able to draw the skin even after spending 5,000 yuan… what to do, this dumbass won't kick me out in a fit of anger, right?]

[It's fine, the little dumbass will get super rich this year, he isn't lacking that 5k.]

[What the hell do you all know, is the little dumbass trying to pull a skin? No, he's pulling Road's heart!]

[The little dumbass doesn't even have many LeBlanc skins on this account, yet he furiously smashed a glorious 5,000 yuan for TTC Lee Sin. It gives off a bit of the same feeling as when he was smashing gifts on Road last time.]

[Won't say anything else, my bros who understand, type it out in the barrage.]

[Understood]

[Understood]

…

After more or less understanding the situation, Lu Boyuan opened up the game assistant, wanting to check Jian Rong's detailed match history for the night.

Just now, he had only swept a cursory glance over it. Jian Rong was the MVP for over half of the matches on the page, and his most frequently played champion was Fizz, the one that he hadn't played well earlier that day.

Right as Lu Boyuan finished looking over the stats from the first game, his phone chimed.

Lu Boyuan lowered his head and checked his phone before he minimized the game assistant and picked an inoffensive barrage comment to answer.

"His performance today? …it was okay, not bad, can't be considered as dragging down the team. Soft's playing style is aggressive, so it's very normal for him not to do well against a slow-paced team like Fighting

Tiger. Was I satisfied?" Lu Boyuan gave a tiny huff of laughter before he said lazily, "It's not important whether I was satisfied or not. But he most likely isn't very satisfied with himself, or else he wouldn't have played Fizz for the entire night."

After he said that, Lu Boyuan opened the lottery's purchase interface and scanned his payment QR code in front of a screen full of question marks.

Once Lu Boyuan finished buying the event tokens needed for the lottery, he stood up and left without saying goodbye to the water friends in the stream.

Lu Boyuan took out a bottle of spring water from the second floor fridge and had just gone back upstairs when his phone chimed again.

[PUD, XIU: Whatcha doing not sleeping this late at night and running over to your newcomer's stream instead.]

[PUD, XIU: You there? My newly created side account also wants to pull a TTC Lee Sin skin.]

[R: Keep dreaming then.]

[PUD, XIU: Haha. Thanks to you, I encountered a whole heap of Graves tonight in ranked, I climbed quite a bit.]

[PUD, XIU: *Ai* my wrist hurts a lot, we had to call the doctor over to our base in the middle of the night for acupuncture… how've you been doing lately?]

The older professional players all had occupational diseases. XIU's tendons were severely inflamed and a large portion of his muscles were strained, in addition to his waist injury. Precisely because of this, the news of him retiring soon had started spreading ever since last year.

[R: Pretty good.]

[PUD, XIU: That's good, recently I just got put in touch with a doctor who I heard was not bad. I'll try it out first and if the results are good, I'll recommend them to you.]

[R: OK]

[PUD, XIU: Oh right, speaking of which, forward me Soft's WeChat.]

[R: ?]

[PUD, XIU: Hey, Savior asked me for it, he said he wants to have some friendly communication with Soft.]

[R: Wants to solo with Jian Rong?]

After being exposed by Lu Boyuan, XIU replied with a smiling emoji.

[R: They can just communicate at the stadium, or tell Savior to get the account from Jian Rong himself the next time they meet.]

[PUD, XIU: …]

[PUD, XIU: Dude, I feel like something's a little weird about you.]

[R: ?]

[PUD, XIU: Aren't you a bit too protective of your team's mid laner?]

Lu Boyuan paused as he was drinking his water.

[PUD, XIU: I could tell just from today's match. I was even wondering why you'd accept the interview when you were that sick, but then you went up and *bambambam* cleared the blame from your team's mid laner.]

[PUD, XIU: Don't try to deny it, we're already old buddies. As for the most effective words to say in every situation, brothers understand best. Purchasing tokens for him to pull skins with, even in the middle of the night, and now you're not even willing to give his WeChat…]

Lu Boyuan twisted the cap back on the bottle. The icy liquid slid down his throat, leaving behind a feeling of comforting relief.

[R: Didn't deny it.]

XIU choked when he saw Lu Boyuan's three word reply, and he deleted the chunk of text that he was typing out for quite a while.

[PUD, XIU: What's going on?]

[R: Nothing's going on.]

[R: Cherishing the team's newcomer, is that not enough?]

[PUD, XIU: I didn't see you cherish Xiao Bai or the rest ah.]

[R: I did, you just didn't see it]

[PUD, XIU: If Xiao Bai saw that, he would feel extremely wronged]

[PUD, XIU: There's really nothing going on between you two?]

Lu Boyuan chuckled.

[R: How old are you again, gossip less. There's nothing going on between us.]

[R: At least, not right now.]

After sending that text, Lu Boyuan ignored XIU's flood of "?" and put his phone on silent before dropping it on the table.

—

Jian Rong returned to the practice room, holding a cup of coffee in his hands. As he shut the door with his foot, he glanced over the barrage and said, astonished, "It actually didn't give me a warning for idling?"

StarTV had a strict system. If a streamer left their computer for longer than a specified time period, an idle warning would pop up. After some more time passed, the system would forcibly shut down the livestream room.

[Come come come, let Dad see just what kind of noble and precious hands you have in order for you to wash them for over ten freaking minutes.]

[Dad was worried that something happened to you, so I helped call the police for you, you can explain the situation to them yourself when the police get to your base in a bit.]

"I was thirsty after I finished washing my hands, so I wanted to pour myself a cup of water. I also checked out the base's coffee machine."

Done explaining, Jian Rong picked up his coffee and took a small sip, which caused his face to instantly crinkle.

[Are you still gonna pull? Been waiting for so long.]

[How's the coffee?]

It tasted a hundred times worse than the coffee that Lu Boyuan had made.

"Tastes bad." Jian Rong endured the bitterness and gulped down half the cup in one go before he set it down to the side. "Pull. Wait for me to add some more money."

With the ease of practice, Jian Rong moved his mouse over to the "purchase" button before he suddenly saw that there was actually a string of numbers following behind the token balance on the left—100,000.

?

Jian Rong stared blankly for a moment… before he slowly leaned in towards the screen to count the zeroes.

After counting the number over and over again five times, he confirmed that there were indeed 100,000 tokens, which converted into 10,000 yuan.

The entire time he was counting the zeroes, Jian Rong's mouth was slightly open, but it didn't close even after he finished counting them.

A long pause later, he mumbled quietly, "…did Tencent bug out?"

The water friends, who had plotted together in advance, spammed out countless comments—

[Congratulations! You're the 5,200,000th lucky player to participate in this lottery event! You've received this company's super-prize!]

[You've received Tencent's 100,000 tokens, along with one Apple MacBook! Once you send out a 10,000 yuan red envelope in the stream, you will be able to unlock the laptop reward!!]

[If you open the window and shout "I am a dumbass" outside then you can also unlock an even more awesome mysterious prize!]

Jian Rong laughed. "Dumbass… just what exactly happened?"

[Xiao Bai came by earlier.]

[Qian-*ge* did it.]

[Pine used your computer.]

Jian Rong rolled his eyes and decided to just check the stream replay himself.

The moment he saw Lu Boyuan appear in the camera frame, he choked firmly on a mouthful of bitter coffee. Jian Rong covered his mouth and coughed until his neck turned red.

Once he heard Lu Boyuan's "*doesn't this skin come back every year*," Jian Rong even more so nearly stopped breathing.

Jian Rong very rarely bought skins. When TTC's championship skins first came out, he had bought them immediately on his other account, so he really didn't know that they returned every year.

He looked at the 100,000 tokens on the webpage and felt his heart ache even more.

"And none of you told me?!" Jian Rong clenched his teeth and went to find customer service. "Can this be refunded…"

[Let me tell you a joke: LoL's lottery can be refunded.]

[Didn't you also pull with 5,000 of your own money? There's no difference between 5,000 and 10,000.]

[It's the captain's love, you're even willing to return it??]

Jian Rong wasn't in the mood to look at the barrage.

When customer service refused him, he forced himself to pick up his phone and send Lu Boyuan a text: [Captain…]

After waiting for a while, Lu Boyuan still didn't answer.

Jian Rong ruffled his hair and felt deeply conflicted. "…stop urging me, I'll pull right now and end the stream after I'm done."

In the first ten pulls, TTC Lee Sin appeared.

Jian Rong was stunned at first before his eyes widened in pleasant surprise, his ears completely red. "It came! The first one!!!"

Before he could get too happy, he saw the remaining tokens left in the account, and Jian Rong wilted again.

After contemplating for a long time, he stubbornly opened the Tencent customer service portal once more—

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Miss, I really can't refund the money?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: If a child steals their parent's money to purchase tokens, do you all not even care?!]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Does justice even exist anymore?? A big company cheating its customers, I see how it is!]

[Damn hahahaha little dumbass you're really freaking shameless!!]

[The child is you, the parent is Road?]

[From now on, don't play 'Good Luck' anymore, it's not half as effective as you going straight to Road's doorway and singing 'Mice Love Rice.'[2]]

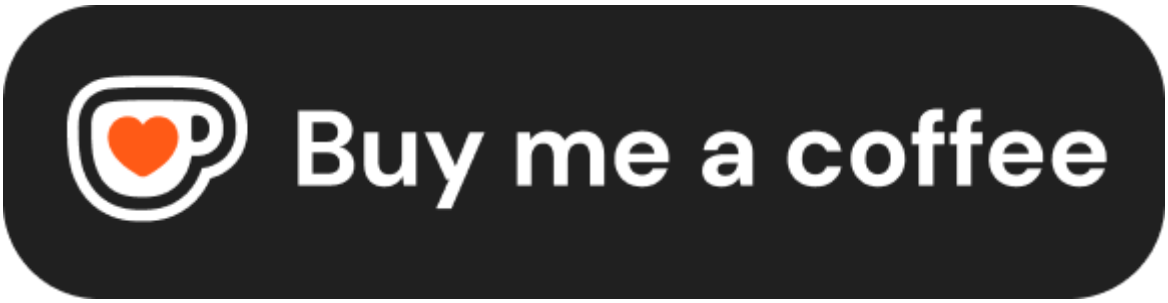
This was also Jian Rong's first time doing something like this. His face flushed red, and he gritted his teeth. "...shut up."

Translation Notes

1. *555 sounds like 'wuwuwu' in Chinese, like the crying noise.* ^
2. *This song. A pop song that was super popular in the 2000s, known for its catchy chorus ("I love you, love you, like how mice love rice")* ^

Yan: Just wanted to thank everyone who's commented so far on the translation~ we don't always have time to like or answer everyone's comments but we do read them all and they're very lovely!!

Also totally didn't expect so many people to play Genshin o.o praying everyone's Zhongli comes home for them!!! Taking down my UID now just to be safe but in case anyone would like to add me, you can message here and I'll get back to you with my UID~ very open to new friends!



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ICDI Chapter 59: Am I the parent or the child?

The next day, Ding-*ge* arrived at the base just as Lu Boyuan returned from his run.

“You went running? Does your body even feel better yet? In the middle of the day like this…” Ding-*ge* blocked Lu Boyuan from going upstairs. “Also, how many times have I told you this already? You have to wear a hat even if you’re just going out to throw away the trash, do you know that there are often fans camping outside of the neighborhood…”

“I didn’t leave the neighborhood.” Lu Boyuan stopped helplessly and picked up a towel to casually wipe his face with. “I’ve also said this before, it’s not that bad.”

“Stop thinking of yourself as an ordinary person all the time, wake up a bit, your advertisement fee is higher than that of who knows how many celebrities!” After Ding-*ge* said that, he glanced at Lu Boyuan’s hand. “Does it still hurt? Let me go get a thermometer…”

Lu Boyuan walked towards the break room. “I already measured it, the fever went down. My hand is fine too.”

Ding-*ge* followed him. “The doctor said that you’re still practicing for too long. How about this, the next spring season match is against Throne, and they’re pretty average this season. We could let Moon go up and get some practice in, and you rest.”

Lu Boyuan frowned. “I can play.”

“I know that you can play, who in the entire LPL doesn’t know that?” Ding-*ge* interrupted him. “But it’s not necessary, it’s just a regular season match, after all. And also, I feel like they’ll be able to win even without you. Even if they do lose, it won’t be a big deal. Don’t tell me that you’re worried about us not entering the playoffs? Recently, you haven’t stopped practicing once, your hand needs to rest.”

Lu Boyuan quietly took a sip of water.

“Listen to *ge* this time… I heard that PUD also urgently called the doctor over to their base last night. XIU’s hand problem seems to be a bit worse off than yours.”

Lu Boyuan swept a look over him. “You have a spy at PUD’s base?”

“Who can hide something like this? Do you think the other teams don’t know about your hand injury?” Ding-*ge* sighed. “XIU’s probably going to end up retiring this year, PUD has already begun secretly looking for a new jungler.”

Lu Boyuan paused slightly, and he put down his bottle. “You even know that?”

Ding-*ge* hummed. “I won’t keep you in the dark either. PWT’s rookie jungler’s contract is set to expire soon, and he’s contacted me privately before. He also revealed to me that PUD was in touch with him, probably because he wanted to raise his own net worth a bit.”

Lu Boyuan nodded. “How did the negotiations go?”

“There were none.” Ding-*ge* said, “Our team isn’t lacking a jungler.”

The corners of Lu Boyuan’s mouth tugged upwards, but at the same time, he couldn’t bring himself to laugh.

XIU had indeed discussed retirement with Lu Boyuan before, but XIU had said that he was planning to hang in there and play for another two years. He wanted to do his best to help his old master PUD, which had served him for many years, get a championship trophy; then, he could retire freely and easily.

LoL’s professional scene had already developed for many years now. The esports clubs abandoning their veterans had long since become commonplace.

Some only found out that they were relegated to the substitute position the night before the competition began. Some were even threatened by their teams: either they could agree to hang up their mantle, or they could stare at the water cooler for an entire season backstage.

Lu Boyuan had witnessed it all and more before. Just a few days ago, the pro player who was threatened to the point of retirement had invited all the people in the LPL veteran group chat out to celebrate his child’s one-month birthday.

The new replacing the old was an unavoidable process for every esports team. No matter how glorious a professional player once was, they would always eventually be submerged in the long river of time.

Lu Boyuan picked up his water and made to leave. Ding-*ge* quickly stopped him. “Where are you going?”

“To take a shower.”

“Wait a moment, the thing I was just talking with you about…”

“Up to you.” Lu Boyuan said, “It’s you all in the management who have the final say concerning who goes up on stage. I’ll follow whatever is planned.”

Ding-*ge* nodded. “Don’t feel too sad about XIU either. Pro players of his caliber won’t have a bad life after they retire.”

Lu Boyuan nodded and didn’t say anything else before he continued upstairs.

Ding-*ge* watched him go. When Lu Boyuan was halfway up the stairs, Ding-*ge* suddenly remembered that he still had something to take care of. “Hey hold on! Is that little damn brat with the dyed blue hair awake yet?!”

That furious roar was the first thing Jian Rong heard when he opened his door.

He drowsily met Lu Boyuan’s gaze. Because he just woke up, his mind was somewhat sluggish.

Ding-*ge* just happened to be standing at the perfect angle to see Jian Rong’s half-open bedroom door through the gaps in the banister. “Jian Rong—come down here at once and explain to me how the fuck a news title

like '*child steals parent's money to recharge account and requests a refund from Tencent*' is related to you!!!"

Jian Rong woke up then, and slammed his door shut with a *bang*.

But he couldn't hide forever. Half an hour later, Jian Rong sat in the living room, holding his noodles while a stream recording of last night's events played out in front of everyone else. He infinitely regretted his past self who had tried to run away earlier.

Xiao Bai sat on the sofa, watching Jian Rong's stream replay from last night, laughing so hard that he felt sore. He lifted his head and asked the person on the other end of the couch, "*Ge*, do you think I have a chance to own the TTC Lee Sin skin?"

Lu Boyuan was playing on his phone. "You don't have it?"

"My newly opened side account on the Black Rose server doesn't." Xiao Bai instantly said.

Lu Boyuan nodded. "That skin will go back on sale in October, when the time comes I'll send you one."

Xiao Bai: "??"

Xiao Bai immediately made his injustice known. "*Ge*, this is discriminatory treatment!"

Jian Rong was sitting on the carpet, his back against the couch, so he couldn't see the other people's expressions. He only heard Lu Boyuan reply

with a simple, “Mn.”

Jian Rong froze for two seconds before he lowered his head and slurped up a large mouthful of noodles.

An inexplicable happiness had just started to bloom in his heart when—

“Jian Rong’s still young, and he’s a newcomer too. It’s normal for Captain to take care of him.” The great master of impartiality, Yuan Qian, patted Xiao Bai’s shoulder. “Captain took care of you a lot before too. Didn’t he constantly take you out to eat back when we just started playing competitively?”

“That’s right.” Xiao Bai thought a bit. “At that time, we only made about a thousand yuan a month, and my *ge* would have to spend several hundred just treating me to meals… *ge*, you’re so great.”

Jian Rong bit through his noodles with a snap.

Deceiving customer service wasn’t a big deal. In any case, it wasn’t like Tencent would refund the money, so most people treated it like a meme.

Ding-*ge* scolded Jian Rong a little and told him to be careful when streaming in the future; he should be especially cautious of not being linked to the word ‘deceive’ again.

Jian Rong concentrated on eating his noodles and nodded at everything Ding-*ge* said.

“Okay, that’s enough. Everyone’s eaten, right?” Ding-*ge* glanced at the time. “Let’s go upstairs, the practice match is about to begin.”

The auntie was on break today, so Ding-*ge* made the noodles that Jian Rong was eating.

Jian Rong washed the bowl and was about to go upstairs to practice when he saw that Lu Boyuan was still sitting on the sofa, playing a match-three game.

Even though he sensed someone approaching him, Lu Boyuan didn’t look up. “What’s up?”

Jian Rong shook off the water on his hands very lightly. “Let me transfer that ten thousand yuan to you, Captain.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t respond. He only turned to face Jian Rong once he finished eliminating all the items in the game, resting his elbow lazily on the back of the couch.

“A child stealing his parent’s money?” he suddenly asked, “Am I the parent or the child?”

Jian Rong was dumbfounded by the question.

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. “I properly earned all the money that I deposited for you, I didn’t steal it, don’t worry.”

Jian Rong snapped out of it, and he rambled, “No, you’re the parent…”

Wait a minute.

What parent or child, that was just something that he made up solely to mess with and trick customer service.

Lu Boyuan: “In that case, the parent voluntarily gave the money, no need to return it.”

After he said that, he turned back around and started the next level of the game.

Jian Rong stood there for a while before he reached up and wiped his face with the still wet palm of his hand.

His phone’s WeChat chimed; Jian Rong didn’t even need to check it to know who was looking for him.

He licked his lips and took two steps closer to Lu Boyuan before he reminded him, “Ding-*ge* is saying to go upstairs.”

Lu Boyuan gave an “en.” “Go ahead.”

Jian Rong was startled. “Are you not going?”

“I’m resting today.” Lu Boyuan’s head was still lowered. “Moon went up already. They’re all waiting for you, so you should go.”

On the way to the practice match room, Jian Rong glanced downstairs through the gaps in the stair railing.

Lu Boyuan was already gone from the living room.

Jian Rong and Yuan Qian were walking at the very end. He pressed his lips together but still couldn't resist tilting his head to ask, "Qian-*ge*, why is the sub playing in today's practice match?"

"It's normal to train with the substitute, other teams frequently play with subs during practice matches." Yuan Qian murmured, "It's probably because Captain practiced too much recently and went over his training limit, so he got a warning from the doctor…"

"Warning?" Jian Rong unconsciously stopped walking. "Didn't his fever go down?"

Yuan Qian's smile froze. Only then did he remember that Jian Rong still didn't know about the captain's hand injury.

Although it wasn't like this was some big secret that had to be hidden no matter what from Jian Rong… Ding-*ge* and the captain both hadn't said anything about it, so Yuan Qian didn't dare to just tell Jian Rong on his own initiative either.

"Does he have another injury too?" People who played games all year round were very sharp when it came to matters like this. Jian Rong demanded, "A pro gaming injury? Is that it?"

Yuan Qian sucked in a deep breath of air and smiled. "Yeah. *Hai*, nowadays who doesn't have some pro gaming injuries? You should also have some from streaming for so long every day before, right? Everyone feels tired when they play for too long. Who knows, maybe it'll be your turn to rest during the next practice match…"

“I don’t rest.” Jian Rong said.

Yuan Qian: “…”

Actually, Jian Rong had guessed a long time ago that Lu Boyuan had a pro gaming injury. After having his suspicions confirmed, he restrained himself and didn’t keep questioning Yuan Qian.

If Lu Boyuan wanted to tell him, then he would’ve already done so that night Jian Rong massaged his hand for him.

Seeing that Jian Rong’s face was filled with concern, Yuan Qian was worried that it would affect their upcoming practice match, so he started to contemplate whether he should comfort Jian Rong a bit.

Jian Rong suddenly turned his head and asked, “Is it very serious?”

Yuan Qian buried his conscience and said, “I’m not entirely sure either, it should be… alright. Anyway, Captain already said that he won’t be retiring this year.”

Jian Rong nodded and strode into the practice match room.

Reality proved that Yuan Qian was overthinking things.

Their conversation didn’t have any effect whatsoever on Jian Rong’s condition. In their practice match that day, Jian Rong completely carried, and he got MVP in three out of the five games.

What Yuan Qian didn’t know was that, upon finishing their matches and returning to the practice room, the first thing that Jian Rong did was

secretly pull up a certain search engine on his phone.

"*What kind of occupational injuries do professional gamers have*"

"*Can hand overuse injuries be cured*"

"*Do severe back injuries hurt a lot*"

…

The search results that came up were all fucking useless. Jian Rong looked up a few questions before he gave up.

He glanced at Lu Boyuan's computer chair; it was empty.

After exiting the website, Jian Rong opened a certain online shopping platform, wanting to order some instant coffee. They were almost out of instant coffee at the base, and he still wasn't used to the coffee machine.

Unexpectedly, the instant the website loaded, the home page was filled with recommendations of items—

[100% good reviews neck massager], [Low frequency physiotherapy equipment for unblocking the meridians – electrotherapy massager], [Back massager – chin up, chest out, be a man]……

Jian Rong couldn't help but click into one and check it out.

The seller extravagantly embellished the functions of the massager, all the customer reviews were positive, the rate of good reviews was 100%!!!

Jian Rong was blinded by these showy advertisements, and he wildly spent money at that Taobao shop.

The owner of the Taobao shop was located right in Shanghai. After Jian Rong contacted them, the owner agreed to ship to Jian Rong using same-city express delivery.

As Xiao Bai passed by Jian Rong, holding his milk tea, he just happened to spot Jian Rong scanning his QR payment code from the corner of his eye. "8,200? That's a hefty sum, whatcha buying?"

Jian Rong slammed his phone face-down on the table. "None of your business."

At seven PM, everyone sat in the living room together eating crayfish while also reviewing their match recordings.

Lu Boyuan finally came downstairs. He wore a calm expression as he sat down next to Jian Rong.

"*Ge*, what were you doing this afternoon?" Xiao Bai asked.

"Sleeping." Lu Boyuan's voice was indifferent. "How was the practice match?"

"We won them all." Moon spoke before Xiao Bai could reply. "...Captain, I was the MVP for a game."

His desire to be praised was very obvious.

Lu Boyuan only nodded, head lowered as he replied to a text.

Jian Rong gnawed on his chopsticks and couldn't resist peeking down at Lu Boyuan's hand.

Lu Boyuan was leaning against the back of the chair the entire time while he was typing, so his back should be fine.

Halfway through their meal, the doorbell rang.

Ding-*ge* slipped off his gloves and walked over to the entryway, opening the digital peephole. He saw a man wearing a hat and mask standing outside, and he frowned as he questioned, "Who is it?"

The person was covered up so much that even his voice sounded muffled. "Express delivery."

Ding-*ge*'s brows furrowed even deeper. "We didn't order any express deliveries—"

"It's mine." Jian Rong abruptly stood up. "I'll go get it."

Ding-*ge* glanced back and asked, "You bought something?"

"Mn, same-city express delivery." Jian Rong replied as he put on his shoes.

Ding-*ge* hesitated briefly before he said to the courier, "Got it, you can just put the item down at the door and go, we'll get it right away."

The box wasn't very big, and it was surprisingly light. Jian Rong held it in his arms and verified the name on the box—"Soft".

It was his, for sure.

Back at the base, Yuan Qian lifted his head and urged, “Finish eating first and then open it, if you don’t come soon we’re going to eat them all.”

Jian Rong found a pair of scissors. “One moment, I’m just going to confirm it.”

He bought so many items, so reasonably speaking, it shouldn’t be this light.

And also… did he write Soft as the recipient name?

Just as Jian Rong tore open the package, the doorbell rang again.

Lu Boyuan walked out from the kitchen right after washing his hands. “I’ll get it.”

Lu Boyuan opened the digital peephole. A courier wearing a certain express delivery company’s jacket was standing outside. “Hello, I’m here to deliver a package. I have a same-city express delivery for Jian Rong here…”

Clatter.

The sound of scissors falling on the ground.

Unease rose in Lu Boyuan’s mind, and he looked back to see Jian Rong staring, shocked, at the package, before he lifted a hand to cover his nose—Lu Boyuan didn’t even think before he started walking towards Jian Rong.

Right as Lu Boyuan was drawing near, Jian Rong snapped out of it and swiftly closed the flaps of the package tightly. He picked up the tape that he had just ripped off and randomly stuck it back on. “Don’t come over here.”

Lu Boyuan looked down. “What is it?”

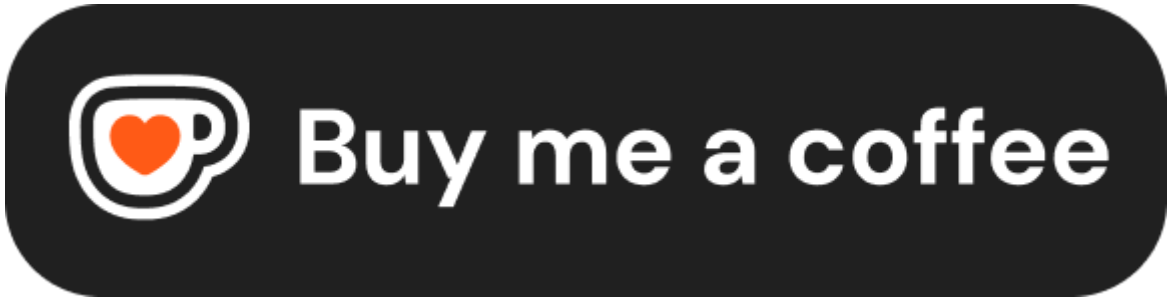
“…a few dead rats.” Jian Rong reacted rapidly and picked up the package before he headed outside.

Lu Boyuan grabbed onto his arm. “Where are you going?”

“It’s not too late if I chase after them right now.” Jian Rong said, “I’m going to smash this on that dumbass’ head.”

Yan: Jian Rong is like that duck with a knife meme. Super tiny but WILL FIGHT. (Also last thing about Genshin I swear but hehe ily to everyone who added me – big shoutout to whoever added me as “Soft” with Chongyun as your profile pic, you made me laugh hahaha)

Wei: I’ll fight that guy too JR!!! Also why do I feel like JR got scammed anyway lol you can’t trust those shady ads



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ICDI Chapter 60: Excuse me, are you the world-renowned Sichuan opera face-changing master, Soft?

Thank you to Kitty and Anonymous for the Ko-fis!

Jian Rong had already planned out how he was going to smash the box on the other person's head.

He wasn't just going to smash it, he was also going to give them a beating.

Lu Boyuan released his arm, and Jian Rong made to charge out the door like a cheetah that had just sharpened its claws.

Lu Boyuan didn't expect that Jian Rong was actually intending to give chase. He immediately reached out and hooked his arm around Jian Rong's neck, stopping him, and Jian Rong instantly withdrew his foot that he had just planted forward.

Lu Boyuan had just finished washing his hands, so his palms were cool, but Jian Rong felt like the places where they were touching prickled faintly before starting to burn. He subconsciously swallowed.

Jian Rong had thin skin, causing Lu Boyuan to notice the bobbing movement of his throat. Two seconds later, Lu Boyuan let go and patted Jian Rong's head.

"They could be hiding anywhere this late at night, you won't be able to find them." Lu Boyuan said, "Put down the box."

Jian Rong swiveled to the left like he was in the military, and he put the box down on the table.

The other people, who were in the middle of eating crayfish, stared blankly for a long time before they finally recovered. Ding-*ge* had just sat down for less than two minutes before he hastily stood up again.

Xiao Bai also followed him over curiously. “What is it?? Let me see!”

Jian Rong stepped to the side and made room for Ding-*ge*. Right as Ding-*ge* was about to open the package, Jian Rong extended his hand and pressed down on top of it.

“It’s pretty gross, and it smells bad.” Jian Rong glanced at Lu Boyuan. “Do you want to stand a bit further away?”

Lu Boyuan shook his head. “Open it.”

The box was opened once more. Xiao Bai instantly exclaimed, “What the fuck is this blasted shit,” before he covered his nose and hunched over like he was going to throw up.

Pine patted his back with a cold expression on his face. “Go to the bathroom if you’re going to vomit.”

Ding-*ge* swiftly closed the box again. He found some tape in a drawer and sealed it back up before he put it in the base’s entryway.

Nobody could bear to eat the remaining crayfish anymore.

Even though Xiao Bai didn't end up vomiting, his face was still extremely pale. He sprawled across the sofa and peered around; none of the others appeared affected, aside from their expressions darkening a little.

"No way…" Xiao Bai turned to ask the first victim: "You're not afraid? Do you not think it's disgusting??"

The moment Jian Rong opened the package, he had indeed felt momentarily stunned. After all, inside was a ball of black and red, and it was impossible to tell what it was unless you looked closely.

After he saw it clearly…

"What's there to be afraid of?" Jian Rong sneered. "It's just some rats, it's not like it was human flesh. If I have the opportunity, I can come up with something even more disgusting and return it to them."

Xiao Bai: "……"

Ding-*ge* came back holding his phone. A staff member was following behind him. "I reported it to the police, they said they'll be over soon. I'm talking to property management about investigating the surveillance right now."

The staff member was someone from property management, and he said promptly, "I've already relayed the incident to my superiors, and I'll look into it for you as soon as they give their approval."

"How did that person sneak in here?" Lu Boyuan raised his head from his phone, his eyes cold.

“We’re checking it out.” The property management employee said, “They most likely took advantage of the gap when the security guards were changing shifts…”

“This isn’t the first time this has happened.” Lu Boyuan interrupted him. “Do you all have to change shifts twenty times every day?”

Lu Boyuan was angry.

When Jian Rong realized that, he looked up from his WeChat messages.

Lu Boyuan looked no different from usual when he was angry, still coolly and indifferently expressionless.

The employee fell into an awkward silence for a while before he forced a smile. “It’s because your team is too famous, a lot of people want to find a way inside…”

“Oh.” Lu Boyuan said, “So you’re also implying it’s our fault.”

“Enough… this incident really is a problem to do with property management. After things are taken care of tonight, I’m going to have a discussion with your managers tomorrow.” Seeing Lu Boyuan’s expression grow colder and colder, Ding-*ge* hurriedly intervened.

“Okay, okay.” The employee broke out into a cold sweat. “As you should! We’ll pass an inspection report up to the top, and we’ll add more preventive measures in the future too. We definitely won’t let something like this happen again!”

The police arrived very quickly. Ding-*ge* exchanged a few words with them before he looked back and said, “I’m going with them to check the surveillance, you guys go and practice first. Jian Rong, you were given a scare tonight, right? Rest early.”

Back at the practice room, Jian Rong started a stream to pass the time. After finishing a game, he stealthily glanced back at Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan was wearing his headphones and watching a movie; his game client wasn’t open.

Once he turned to face forward again, the barrage was questioning him.

[In the last forty minutes of the stream, you’ve looked behind yourself seven times. You do it when you’re queuing, when you’re picking a champion, when you die, even when you revive. Just what the fuck are you looking at?]

[Do you even need to ask? That’s where Road sits.]

[Is the view nice? Do you like it? Can you let me take a look too?]

[Little dumbass, I heard that you guys received a frightening package??]

[Is that true or not? How awful WTF, did you catch the culprit?]

Jian Rong’s mouse paused. “How do you all know about that?”

[Someone posted on Tieba.]

[So it’s real?? Isn’t the security around TTC’s base a little too loose?]

[Can you all stop talking about this already, what if someone imitates the crime?]

Jian Rong went to check out Tieba. Sure enough, he saw a post related to the incident.

There was only one line in the post: [TTC received a frightening package. The box was allegedly bloody, specifics unknown.]

Jian Rong shared the post in their WeChat group.

[Ding-*ge*: I saw it already, don't know who leaked it. Forget it, it's fine, you guys just keep practicing.]

"Don't insult frightening packages. It was just a few dead rats, that's all." Jian Rong put down his phone and started queueing again, chewing on his gum. "Imitate the crime? Try it. I was inexperienced this time, but I'll definitely perform well next time. Let's see who plays who.

"Why rats… I couldn't figure that out either. If they had shipped their own head over, that would've probably been more effective.

"Who have I offended before…" When Jian Rong read that comment aloud, he briefly went quiet. "I'll have to look at my list."

[Hahahahahaha fucking hell.]

[Damn, that range is indeed a bit extensive hah.]

[You'll need to divide them up too. You should be able to eliminate pro players and commentators, I feel like it's probably a pro player's fan.]

[It’s a Doufu fan for sure.]

“Don’t make wild guesses.” Jian Rong selected his champion. “Room mod, take a look and block the ones who brought up other players. There’s no point in joking about something like this.”

[I still think that it’s so scary. If the person hasn’t been caught yet, what if they’re here in the livestream room right now staring at you……]

[Be quiet stop talking!! Dumbass darling maybe you should just stop streaming and go sleep *wuwuwu*]

[Try to be careful in the future, it’s already at the extent where weirdos are knocking on your door. If you don’t get rid of them, there’ll be a next time.]

“I’m going to play for another two hours, and then I’ll stop streaming. No all-nighters today.” Jian Rong scoffed. “Next time? If this dumbass dares to show up again, I’m definitely going to…”

His headphones were pulled off, and Lu Boyuan’s fingers skated across the edge of his ear. “Streaming?”

“—going to escort them over to the police, so that they’ll be punished by the law.” Jian Rong finished his sentence before he lifted his head and said, “…mn, just to pass the time.”

Lu Boyuan nodded very slightly and placed the headphones cord on his shoulder. “Concentrate on streaming the game, don’t talk about other things.”

After receiving Jian Rong's response, Lu Boyuan pushed open the door and walked out of the practice room.

[Road isn't practicing? It's not even nine yet and he left??]

[Keep talking ah, weren't you being super domineering? Weren't you going to provoke that dumbass?]

[Excuse me, are you the world-renowned Sichuan opera face-changing[1] master, Soft?]

[Excuse me, are you the world-renowned Sichuan opera face-changing master, Soft?]

…

"Stop spamming." Jian Rong's right elbow was propped up on the armrest of his chair as his hand covered his ear. " I only have one identity: I'm your dad."

—

This wasn't the first time a frightening package had appeared in the esports circle. PUD, Fighting Tiger, and TTC had all received them before.

However, that was something that had happened several years ago. At the time, the esports circle wasn't as fully developed as it was now, and packages of any kind could easily be shipped to the base. In recent years, the esports clubs had become much more cognizant of security measures, so this sort of thing very rarely happened anymore.

As a result, Jian Rong's package still drew quite a lot of attention.

Three days later, it was another competition day.

On the way to the arena, Ding-*ge* instructed, "For the next few days, don't respond to this incident on Weibo or in your streams, especially Jian Rong… every word and action from you all will influence the fans' emotions. Some fans have already started causing trouble for the neighborhood's property management."

They were in a minivan today, and Jian Rong was wearing one bud of his earphones. "Got it."

Lu Boyuan lifted his chin, revealing his eyes underneath the brim of his hat. He looked at Ding-*ge* and asked, "Still no news?"

Ding-*ge* shook his head. "We saw the culprit on the surveillance tape. He snuck in by following after an elderly couple, but he was covered up too well and we couldn't see anything clearly. Right now, the police are checking the nearby security cameras, so it'll probably still take a few more days."

Yuan Qian was puzzled. "Just who in the world did Xiao Rong anger? Don't tell me it's actually some pro player's fan? Do such diehard fans actually exist?"

Xiao Bai scooted forward and asked, "Jian Rong, tell me the truth, does someone have a grudge against you? Did you borrow money and not return it? Or did you steal someone else's girlfriend?"

Jian Rong: “I stole your mom.”

“…” Xiao Bai sat back in his seat and muttered, “If you didn’t, then just say it, why swear at me?”

Theirs was the first match of the day. The car drove over to the stadium’s back entrance and, as usual, a group of fans was waiting outside of the security tape that the arena had put up, holding their support banners.

Jian Rong didn’t remove his earphones. He slung his equipment bag over one shoulder and got out of the car with the other members.

The car was parked very close to the stadium, and they could enter through the back door with just a few steps. The surrounding fans were all shouting the members’ names, but Jian Rong didn’t want to spare a single glance at those signs with “*dumbass*” and “*son*” written on them, so he walked extremely quickly.

“Son, good—hey!!” A piercing female voice suddenly shouted, “Watch out!!!”

Jian Rong’s head whipped around, and he saw a short and small man bypass the flimsy security tape before he malevolently pointed a knife at Jian Rong.

Xiao Bai looked back to witness this scene, and he was so shocked that half his soul flew away. “Jian Rong, run for it!!!”

Jian Rong’s first instinct was to counterattack with his equipment bag. He had just slipped off his bag to grip the strap in his hand when someone

abruptly collided firmly into his back. Before Jian Rong could recover, someone embraced him tightly.

Lu Boyuan's body completely separated Jian Rong from that man.

The security guards reacted extremely fast. They immediately reached out and grabbed that person's clothing, dragging him back, but that person continued to relentlessly charge forward. He was also raving and shouting about some nonsense, and for a moment, the entire situation was in chaos.

By the time the surrounding people snapped out of it and attempted to help, they heard a "*thump*" noise, and the attacker, along with his knife… was sent flying by a kick.

He really flew. Even though it was only for half a step, both of his feet truly did leave the ground, and the muffled sound his body made when it landed on the floor was very solid.

The scene went quiet for a few seconds. Everyone first looked at the man who was curled up on the ground, covering his stomach, before they looked at the person who had just kicked him, Lu Boyuan.

Jian Rong didn't see that moment occur.

His mind was filled with: if the knife pierced Lu Boyuan, he was going to make this dumbass go to hell.

So, the instant Lu Boyuan released him, Jian Rong picked up his equipment bag and tried to go beat up the person on the floor. "Motherfucker who are

you trying to scare with a knife I'm going to fucking pummel you to death…"

Jian Rong's equipment bag was thrown, but the owner didn't rush out after it.

He was picked up by Lu Boyuan.

It was the kind of picked up where both his feet left the ground—or maybe it could be called a "shoulder carry."

At first, Jian Rong was stunned when he was picked up. From the corner of his eyes, he saw that the person on the ground was covering his stomach and still attempting to grab his knife, but he was immediately restrained again by the security guards.

When the fans recovered, they were greeted with the sight of Road carrying Soft into the stadium, while Soft continued to unceasingly swear—

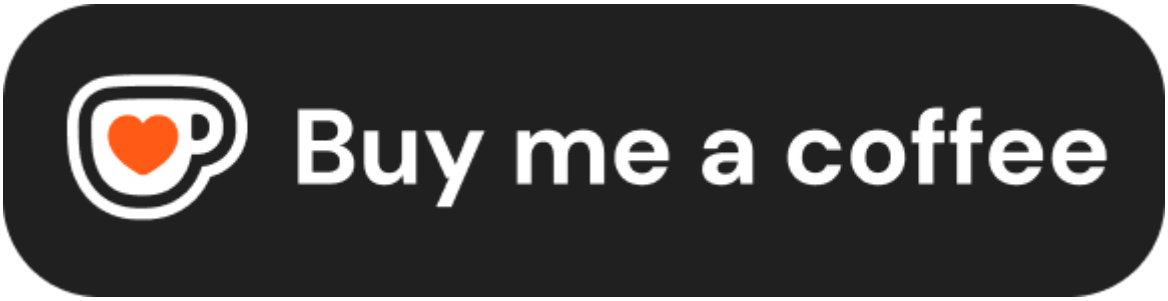
"Put me down I can beat him I really can beat him…" Unable to struggle free, Jian Rong glared at the person on the ground. "Dumbass, you're still reaching for the knife?? Even if you had ten knives you still wouldn't be able to touch your dad once—you're also the one who sent that package, right? Piece of shit, today you're in luck, don't let Dad see you again in the future! Every time I see you, I'll beat you up!"

Translation Notes

1. *A subgenre of Sichuan opera, in which the actor specializes in swiftly changing masks many times during a single performance (without going off-stage)* ^

Wei: Ahhh that's so scary T^T Jian Rong stop trying to fight them!! It's dangerous!!

Also thank you to everyone who has ever left us a Ko-fi! We used it to upgrade the site so now everything should be ad-free~ Yan was also very insistent on getting rid of the wordpress in the URL so that's gone too now LOL



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ICDI Chapter 61: I hit someone, you cursed at someone, we'll each be penalized ten thousand yuan.

Thank you to VitaB and Somebody for the Ko-fis!

If Jian Rong were to exert some force, he would actually be able to break free, and he thrashed once before he remembered that Lu Boyuan's hand was injured. Instantly, he didn't dare to move anymore, and he had no choice but to rely on his mouth to vent his anger.

Jian Rong only stopped talking once he couldn't see the person anymore.

He had said too many things all at once, so he was a little out of breath, and he looked down only to realize that his current situation was a little strange.

Jian Rong was being completely carried by Lu Boyuan. Even though Lu Boyuan was holding him very stably, Jian Rong had still subconsciously grabbed onto something to maintain his balance.

His left arm had hooked itself around Lu Boyuan's neck… or perhaps it could be called an embrace. He had also knocked Lu Boyuan's hat a bit askew, revealing a disorderly tuft of hair on the left.

Though he had smelled it many times by now, Jian Rong still felt like the laundry detergent scent clinging to Lu Boyuan's body was especially fragrant.

Jian Rong was briefly stunned, before he instantly released his hold.

Feeling the heat that was pressed against his neck disappear, Lu Boyuan asked, “Done cursing?”

Jian Rong: “…mn.”

Jian Rong was about to tell Lu Boyuan to put him down, only for Lu Boyuan to let go first—they had reached the break room.

Lu Boyuan looked down and questioned, “Any injuries.”

Jian Rong found his balance and shook his head. “He didn’t touch me, you…”

“Captain.” Moon came up and interrupted their conversation. He lowered his head and peered at Lu Boyuan’s hand. “How’s your hand? Aren’t you not allowed to lift heavy objects…”

Moon had resisted the urge to ask that question the entire way over. Just then, the situation was chaotic, and they were surrounded by staff, so it wasn’t suitable for him to bring it up either.

Jian Rong was startled, and he also looked down at Lu Boyuan’s hand.

Not allowed to lift heavy objects? How come he never heard about that before?

“It’s fine.” Lu Boyuan replied coolly. He swept his gaze over Jian Rong once, and after ensuring that there weren’t any injuries and that his clothes

weren't dirty either, he asked, "Do you recognize that person from just now?"

"I don't." Jian Rong clenched his teeth. "Your hand…"

Lu Boyuan: "You're not heavy."

Right as he said that, Lu Boyuan spotted Ding-*ge* standing outside the door from his peripheral vision. Ding-*ge* was in the middle of discussing something with a staff member.

Lu Boyuan took off his hat, and Moon hastily reached out. "I'll help you hold it, *ge*."

"No need." Lu Boyuan lightly plopped the hat on Jian Rong's head before he glanced around at everyone. "The match starts in fifteen minutes. Adjust your moods, don't let other things affect your competition condition."

After tossing down that statement, Lu Boyuan pushed open the door and left, joining Ding-*ge*'s discussion with the staff.

The incident had occurred too abruptly. Besides the people directly involved, the others were all given a scare.

Xiao Bai reached up and patted his chest only once Lu Boyuan was gone. "… so scary."

Hezi, who was sitting in silence for quite some time at the side, nodded in agreement. "He actually had a knife too, how terrifying!"

“I was referring to my *ge*.” Xiao Bai took a sip of water to suppress his alarm. “That kick earlier, I was afraid that he would send him straight into the afterlife.”

“Kick who?” Jian Rong was originally spacing out, one leg propped over the other, but he instantly sat up straight when he heard that. “That dumbass kicked Road?!”

With Jian Rong’s attitude, Xiao Bai suspected that if he said yes, Jian Rong would immediately charge back out there and call that person back to have another fight.

“No no no, how is that possible!” Xiao Bai quickly said, “My *ge* was the one who kicked him!”

Lu Boyuan hit him?

Jian Rong was stupefied. He hadn’t seen anything at all, since Lu Boyuan had covered him up too tightly. Even Jian Rong’s memory of that dumbass’ face was very blurry.

The door opened, and Lu Boyuan returned to the break room with Ding-*ge* following behind him. After entering, Ding-*ge* directly locked the door.

“How is it?” Pine asked, lifting his head and putting Fight the Landlord on autoplay.

“We reported it to the police and sent the person to the hospital. I had someone go with him, and they’ll call me first thing if anything comes up.” It was the middle of winter, yet Ding-*ge*’s forehead was actually covered

with sweat from fright. He had worked for so many years in the esports circle, but this was his first time encountering something like this.

He opened his mouth to say something, but hesitated again as he glanced at Lu Boyuan. “I saw that your kick landed solidly on his stomach, if anything happens…”

“Don’t worry.” Lu Boyuan sat down next to Jian Rong and picked up the remote control before he turned on the live broadcast. “He won’t die from being kicked there.”

Ding-*ge*: “?”

“Did that person send the rats too?” Yuan Qian asked, frowning.

Ding-*ge* shook his head. “Don’t know, he wouldn’t say anything, he just kept crying like a fool. But I feel like he looks similar, the person who pressed the doorbell the other day was also short and skinny. Let’s just wait for the results of the police interrogation… Jian Rong, were you injured?”

Jian Rong: “No.”

“That’s good. Concentrate on the match first, we can talk about the rest later.” Ding-*ge* handed the equipment bag that was just retrieved from the side of the road to Jian Rong. “You threw the bag pretty viciously, check and see if anything’s broken or not.”

Xiao Bai said, “How could anything be broken? He just smashed it once, and there’s the backpack acting as a buffer too…”

Jian Rong opened the bag, revealing the corner of the keyboard. There was a clear and distinct crack on it.

Xiao Bai stared at the keyboard for a few seconds. “You’re really something… a tiny figure, an enormous strength.”

“That strength can get even bigger.” Jian Rong touched the crack regretfully before he zipped the bag up again with a cold expression. “Do you want to test it out?”

Xiao Bai shut up.

Ding-*ge* said hastily, “It’s fine, I brought a backup keyboard…”

“Use mine.” Lu Boyuan interrupted him and picked up his own bag from the ground, setting it down on the table. “His keyboard is the same model as mine, it’ll feel a bit more familiar.”

Yesterday, Ding-*ge* had already let everyone know that their substitute jungler, Moon, would be playing today.

Ding-*ge* furrowed his brows and was about to say something when the staff member knocked on their door, urging them to get ready to go on stage.

Ding-*ge* led the five team members on stage, and in a split second, the break room grew empty and desolate.

Lu Boyuan sat there quietly. In his professional career, which was over five years long, situations like this rarely happened, where he sat in the break room watching his teammates play.

Jian Rong carried Lu Boyuan's equipment bag on stage; he connected the peripherals and checked them. The camera frequently focused on him, but the youth's face was completely expressionless, and he wasn't even willing to spare a single look at the camera.

The commentators continuously analyzed the reason why Lu Boyuan wasn't playing, all the way until the pick/ban phase.

Ten minutes later, the game began, and Ding-*ge* hurried back to the break room. He sat down next to Lu Boyuan, holding his little record notebook.

"What in the world was going on in your head today?" Ding-*ge* lowered his voice and asked, "Normally I can't even bear to let you lift a plastic bag, but then you just go and pick him right up??"

"I used my left hand, and he's not heavy either."

"Mn, not heavy, he's just a human who weighs over 60 kilograms[1]." Ding-*ge* wore a complicated expression. "Also… I didn't dare to say anything earlier because I was worried it would affect their competition conditions, but even without me saying anything, you should also be aware of it yourself. Fighting and brawling are top prohibitions, do you know what the consequences of your kick are? To tell the truth, my scalp, back, and bottom are all numb right now, I'm afraid of the LPL sending a notification over, banning you from competing for half a year or a year."

Lu Boyuan was silent.

Ding-*ge* sighed. "What's more, that person hadn't injured anyone either, and he was already caught by the security guards. Couldn't you have just

held yourself back a bit…"

The player cam in the bottom right corner switched to Jian Rong. The youth was using Lu Boyuan's keyboard and headphones, and the corners of his lips were drawn tight; clearly, he was still angry.

Jian Rong had never been able to hide his emotions. His playstyle was even more aggressive today than usual, to the point that the other team's mid laner didn't even dare to come out from the tower.

Lu Boyuan only looked away when the camera shifted to Yuan Qian. He interrupted the endless chattering of the person next to him. "I couldn't do it. Can you let me watch this match in peace?"

They were playing against a team called Throne today, who had just undergone major player changes that season, so neither their mid laner or ADC were powerful. That was precisely why Ding-*ge* would allow the substitute to play.

There was a large disparity in team strength, and all three of TTC's lanes were at an advantage in both rounds. One hour later, TTC ended the match with a score of 2:0.

Because all three lanes played extremely well, the post-match MVP was given to Pine, who got a quadra kill.

Jian Rong hurried off stage and opened the break room door, but he only saw the assistant coach and Hezi.

“The police called, Ding-*ge* and Captain went over first after they finished watching the match.” Hezi explained.

Jian Rong nodded and put Lu Boyuan’s equipment properly back into the bag before he asked, “Which station? I can just take a taxi over.”

The assistant coach hastily said, “You don’t need to go.”

Jian Rong’s movements paused. “What do you mean?”

The assistant coach: “Ding-*ge* said that you shouldn’t be involved in this, they’ll take care of it.”

Jian Rong’s eyebrows knitted together. “Then why does Road also have to go to the police station?”

The assistant coach coughed lightly. “After all… he kicked the person, so he still has to give a statement or something.”

Jian Rong didn’t understand.

He was the one who received the package, and he was also the one who was going to be stabbed. How come in the end, this incident had nothing to do with him anymore?

“Don’t overthink it, we’re not letting you go for your own good.” The assistant coach patted his shoulder. “Let’s go back to the base first.”

Jian Rong didn’t want to. He picked up his phone and was dead set on calling a car over to the station.

Xiao Bai swiftly sent Lu Boyuan a WeChat voice message, saying, "*Ge*, if you don't stop him he's gonna go to the station and get into a fight with the police."

As a result, the moment Jian Rong called a car, Lu Boyuan's text came in.

It was a simple "*go back*," like a message that was casually typed out when he was busy; it didn't even have any punctuation.

Jian Rong reluctantly and unwillingly returned to the base.

At 1:30 AM, Lu Boyuan exited the building and let out an extremely long exhale.

After they had finished giving their statement at the police station, they went over to the LPL to discuss the resolution of this incident with the LPL's staff. They were in discussions about it all the way until now and only just tentatively resolved it.

"Who would've thought." Ding-*ge* came back holding two hot drinks and handed one to Lu Boyuan. "There would be a day when you're also penalized by the LPL."

Lu Boyuan took the drink. "Mn, it can be considered as coming full circle."

Ding-*ge* laughed out of anger, and he started the car. "Let's go, I'll send you back to the base."

At a red light, Ding-*ge* glanced over randomly and saw that Lu Boyuan had just opened a certain livestream room.

The stream was completely dark, and "*this streamer isn't home~*" was written on the screen.

Ding-*ge*'s vision was good, and he asked, "It's the middle of the night, why are you running over to Jian Rong's livestream room."

Lu Boyuan answered with a "*no reason*" before he opened the mobile LoL helper app and checked Jian Rong's match history.

Jian Rong played six ranked games after returning to the base. He lost four of them, and he was obviously growing more and more irritated the longer he played, as his scores weren't very good.

The last game was an hour ago, so he should've gone to rest by now.

Lu Boyuan slipped his phone into his pocket. A few seconds later, he turned and met Ding-*ge*'s inquisitive gaze. "What is it?"

The light turned green. Ding-*ge* looked away and stepped on the gas. "Nothing, I just feel like something's a bit off about you."

Lu Boyuan propped his elbow up against the window, leaning his face against the back of his hand. He gave a lazy laugh and didn't reply.

Recently, Ding-*ge* hadn't gone back to his house to sleep much, and he was worried that if things continued like this, his marriage would fall through sooner or later. After he sent Lu Boyuan back to the base, he went back home to find his wife.

The night after they finished a match, the team members usually wouldn't practice too late. But at that current moment, the light in the first floor living room was still on.

When he saw Jian Rong lying down, asleep, on the couch, for once Lu Boyuan was startled.

Their first game from their match against Fighting Tiger was playing on the TV. Who knew how many times it had looped; right now, the game was only ten minutes in.

Jian Rong's mouth was slightly open as he slept, and his phone had already dropped onto the carpet.

Lu Boyuan bent over and picked it up. Since its owner had set it to never lock automatically, the phone was still frozen on what Jian Rong was looking at before he had fallen asleep.

It was a certain famous LoL Tieba. If any professional player wanted to be unhappy, they just needed to scroll through this Tieba.

Jian Rong was looking at a post called [Road hitting a person – entire video], and he was in the middle of fighting with someone in the comments.

It wasn't clear what Jian Rong had said insultingly beforehand, but this hater had already completely lost their temper—

[That person was restrained by the security guards already, did Road not go up and kick that person for no reason? Damn, whatever I'm not going to argue with you anymore. Sure, you're good at talking, okay? I declare you

the #1 Road fan of this forum, one person trading insults with eighty other comments. I concede, you're amazing.]

The words that Jian Rong had typed out were still in the chat box and hadn't been sent yet: [If wielding a knife can even be considered as "for no reason," then you just wait, I'll wield a torch and come wish you a Happy New Year right now]

The message was unfinished, and it stopped here.

There were a few other comments that had specifically mentioned Soft and insulted him, but Jian Rong completely ignored those.

Although the heating was on in the base, Jian Rong would definitely feel uncomfortable the next day if he slept on the couch for the entire night.

Lu Boyuan locked the phone and reached out a hand to ruffle Jian Rong's hair.

Jian Rong was in a light sleep, so he woke up instantly.

He blinked blankly at first when he raised his head and saw Lu Boyuan. Because of the sluggishness that came from waking up, Jian Rong continued to lie there, unmoving, his eyes a bit red from exhaustion. "...I heard the assistant coach say that you guys went over to the LPL."

When Jian Rong didn't ask about that attacker, Lu Boyuan felt a bit surprised, but he still responded, "Mn."

"How was it?" Jian Rong's voice was a bit hoarse. "...will there be a penalty?"

“Yes.”

Jian Rong asked, unwilling to give up, “You were also punished?”

“Yes.”

Jian Rong went silent.

Just then, he had looked up the LPL’s past punishments when it came to fighting or brawling. Two people were banned from competing for a season, one person was banned from competing forever.

Jian Rong stared dumbly at Lu Boyuan for a few seconds before he stood up. With a head of messy hair, he picked up his jacket and started to put it on.

Lu Boyuan called out to him. “Where are you going?”

Jian Rong said blearily, “To talk some sense into them.”

As far as Lu Boyuan could tell, Jian Rong’s current attitude didn’t seem like that of someone who was going to talk some sense into them; rather, it seemed like he was going to wield a torch and wish them a Happy New Year.

He hooked onto the hood of Jian Rong’s jacket. “Don’t go.”

“Why? Are they off work?” With a *swish*, Jian Rong pulled the coat zipper all the way up to his neck. “When will the punishment announcement be posted? What time do they start working tomorrow morning?”

“We just finished discussions, they won’t post it that fast.” Lu Boyuan said, “Also, I’ve already accepted this punishment.”

“You accepted it?!” Jian Rong exploded. “I don’t! That dumbass was the one who charged up holding a knife all on his own, so why the hell are they punishing you? What does this have to do with you! They’re being completely unreasonable…”

“It is a little unreasonable.” Lu Boyuan paused slightly. “But I’m still willing to pay the ten thousand yuan. After all, I really did hit him, so I have to put on an appearance… what’s more, Ding-*ge* said that the club will reimburse this ten thousand.”

“Even if you hit him, that’s still out of legitimate self-defense, so why do you have to be banned from competing—” Jian Rong’s mouth moved faster than his brain, and he screeched to a halt halfway through his sentence. “… ten thousand?”

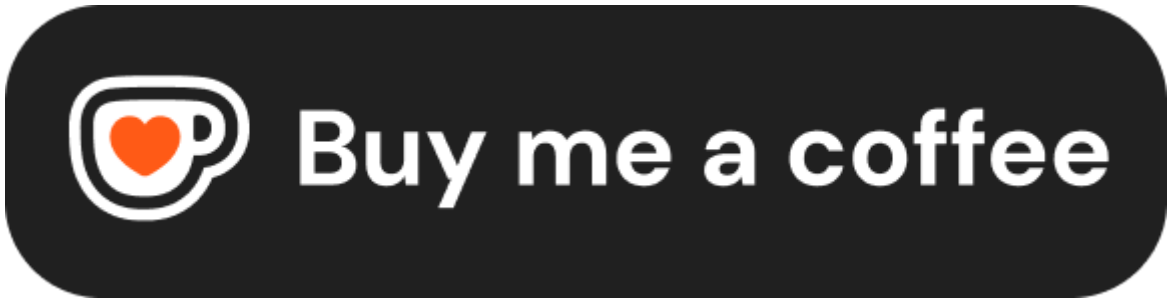
Lu Boyuan gave an “en.” “I hit someone, you cursed at someone, we’ll each be penalized ten thousand yuan. Do you have any objections? If you do, I’ll tell Ding-*ge* to negotiate with them again tomorrow.”

This was way better than what Jian Rong had expected, to the point that he stood there stupidly for a moment before he answered, “…I don’t.”

Lu Boyuan nodded and reached out to tug down a bit the jacket zipper that Jian Rong had pulled nearly all the way up to his chin. “Then head upstairs and go to bed.”

Translation Notes

1. *Roughly over 130 pounds* ^



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ICDI Chapter 62: Soft definitely likes Road!

Following the match, Jian Rong was absent-minded the entire night. After acting as a charity donor in the Summoner's Rift for an evening, he decided to just simply power off his computer and go downstairs to wait for Lu Boyuan to return.

Then he turned on the match recording as an accompaniment and fervently argued with people on Tieba for three hours straight. However, the commentators' voices coming from the TV were too sleep-inducing, and all the people trading insults with him on Tieba were also fairly useless, always throwing out the same two or three phrases, unable to come up with anything new. As he threw out insult after insult, he eventually fell asleep.

After the weight on his mind was lifted, Jian Rong came out of the shower and let out an extremely long sigh.

Even though he was also very unhappy about the fine, at least it wasn't a competition ban.

He casually rubbed his hair a few times before he spotted from the corner of his eye the jacket that he had taken off earlier, and he remembered how Lu Boyuan had just tugged on his zipper…

Jian Rong rubbed his face with the towel before he carefully hung the jacket back up in the closet.

The packages that he had received a few days ago were strewn over the floor. The boxes were filled with all sorts of massagers that Jian Rong had

opened and used already.

Jian Rong definitely wouldn't randomly let Lu Boyuan use these things, so he had tried a few out on himself beforehand. He felt like they all weren't very effective, and if the last few massagers still weren't any good, he was going to find the shop owner and have a nice heart-to-heart chat with them.

The next afternoon, Ding-*ge* came back to the base with some news.

He closed the door to the practice room. "The investigation results are out. That dumbass recently went bankrupt…"

"Serves him right." Yuan Qian cut in. "But what does him going bankrupt have to do with Jian Rong? It's not like Jian Rong made him go bankrupt."

Ding-*ge* lifted an eyebrow. "He actually did."

The others were silent for a moment, before they each turned to look at Jian Rong.

Yuan Qian sighed. "Is this the legendary *'the days have grown cold, let the Wang corporation go bankrupt'*[1]? I've experienced it now."

"Jian Rong, if I've ever offended you in the past, it's all my fault." Xiao Bai scooted closer. "Last night when we were playing ranked, I didn't really think you were trash, it's all because our other teammates and I just couldn't keep up with your rhythm…"

Jian Rong was in the middle of reading the patch notes for the next game update, and he didn't bother looking over when he heard that. "If I had that kind of ability, I wouldn't come and work here."

"Enough, let's get back to business." Now that things were mostly resolved, Ding-*ge*'s expression also grew much more relaxed, and he finished what he was saying earlier. "That person is a small-scale gambling banker who ran a gambling house."

Once he said that, everyone understood.

Because of what happened with Kan, TTC's members were all sensitive to the word 'gambling.' Xiao Bai rolled his eyes so hard they almost flew into the sky.

After all the chaos last night, Lu Boyuan woke up the latest today. He sat in front of his computer, head lowered as he played a match three game on his phone. He held a piece of toast in his other hand, but he wasn't very focused on eating it.

"Small-scale gambling banker?" Noticing Ding-*ge*'s phrasing, Pine asked, "They're all gambling bankers, what's the difference."

"Of course there's a difference." Ding-*ge* laughed mockingly. "The one who sought out Kan before was a large-scale banker. They'll take on any bet and accept any stakes, whereas small bankers only take on one bet. Using yesterday's match as an example, he would only start a bet with 'TTC wins' or 'the match time exceeds thirty minutes' as the sole wager, and he won't accept anything else. Actually, it's the equivalent of putting himself on the

betting table as well. This sort of small-scale banker earns money quickly, but they also lose faster too."

Yuan Qian caught on. "So you mean that he opened a gambling house based on our team, lost his money, and then blamed it on Jian Rong?"

Ding-*ge* nodded. "Correct. Apparently, after Jian Rong joined the team, he lost every bet that he started. Probably because Jian Rong is a newcomer, at first he only accepted bets in which the other party wagered that we would win[2], all the way until the match against Fighting Tiger, when he finally yielded and bet on us winning. Unexpectedly, a big client came during that first game… Jian Rong played averagely during that match's first round, so he thought that Jian Rong was matchfixing and manipulating the betting tables."

"Dumbass." Jian Rong clicked his mouse loudly. "Gambling dogs will undoubtedly die."

Xiao Bai nodded in agreement. "Will undoubtedly die!"

Lu Boyuan rapidly eliminated cubes in his game and asked without looking up, "Did they find the people who participated in the gamble?"

"They found a few, the police work very fast." Ding-*ge* heaved a sigh. "I heard that the big client put down over two million yuan on just one game, what are people even thinking nowadays? If you have that much money, why don't you go do something else… in any case, that person's in big trouble now. The consequence for opening a gambling house alone is enough to make him suffer."

Lu Boyuan gave an “en.” “It’ll be troubling you a bit, but keep an eye on this incident.”

“Got it.” Ding-*ge* cleared his throat and looked at Jian Rong. “Also, about the LPL… I talked it over with them last night. What you two did yesterday at the backstage entrance was captured on camera by the fans and spread over the internet. Even though we’re in the right concerning this matter, it still isn’t a good influence, so the outcome of the negotiations was that you and Xiao Lu would each hand over a ten thousand penalty.”

Worried that Jian Rong wouldn’t accept it, Ding-*ge* said hastily, “Of course, you guys definitely didn’t do anything wrong. So I discussed it with the boss, and we decided that the club would reimburse the fines for you two.”

“Damn, they’re even going to be penalized for this?” Xiao Bai couldn’t help but say, “But Jian Rong was nearly stabbed yesterday! It isn’t too much for him to curse a bit, right?”

“It’s not.” Ding-*ge* exhaled. “But the LPL also has their own rules. What Xiao Lu did yesterday is called using violence to fight violence, so the LPL definitely has to punish him a bit for obligatory reasons. As for Xiao Rong, that was indeed… how about this, I’ll go negotiate with them again and see if I can exempt Jian Rong’s.”

“No need.” Jian Rong refused. “If there has to be a punishment, we’ll be punished together.”

Everyone else went silent for a few seconds.

Xiao Bai crinkled his face and asked, “How come you’re treating this as if you’re at school, and that your disciplinary record will be automatically reset next semester? If you get too many penalties, you’ll probably end up being directly banned from competing the next time you do something wrong again.”

“Then isn’t it fine as long as I don’t do something wrong?” Jian Rong persevered. “You don’t need to negotiate with them. I’ll take the penalty with Captain, I can also pay the ten thousand out of my own pocket as well.”

Ding-*ge* was speechless. What was wrong with all these people?

“Fine, I don’t want to see the LPL’s people again for a while either.” Ding-*ge* rubbed his forehead. “Consider this as me begging you all, can you please just let me peacefully finish this year?”

After explaining everything, Ding-*ge* was about to leave the practice room, but then he saw Jian Rong minimize the game client and open the streaming platform.

“You’re… still going to stream?” Ding-*ge* said hesitantly, “Maybe you shouldn’t stream for the next few days, and don’t look at all that stuff on Weibo or Tieba either. Right now, there are a lot of moronic antis who are stirring things up about you online.”

“I’m just going to casually cheat out some gifts.” Jian Rong skillfully adjusted his peripherals. “Also, why does someone else have to stir things up about me? I can do it myself.”

Ding-*ge* still wanted to stop him, but Jian Rong had already pressed down on the "*start stream*" button.

What the eyes don't see, the heart doesn't grieve over. Ding-*ge* covered his eyes and walked away.

Nobody expected Jian Rong to stream at a time like this. At the beginning, the barrage was filled with question marks, causing the comments containing actual words to stand out much more.

"Why stream?" Jian Rong minimized the stream window, only leaving behind the barrage helper. "Why else? To pass the time and trick out some gifts."

After Ding-*ge* left, he immediately contacted StarTV's employees, which was why the room mods arrived extremely promptly this time. Those who were trying to stir up drama were all banned right after sending a single comment.

[If you're going to trick us, then just trick us, do you have to always put it so bluntly? Every time *laozi* sends you a gift, it makes me loathe myself a lot!]

[My darling husband must have been so shocked~ sending a little star to you, use this gift money to buy a copy of 'The Art of Speaking,' try your best not to be threatened at knifepoint again in the future.]

[What in the world was the grudge or grievance? You stole their boyfriend?]

“Don’t call me husband.” Jian Rong blurted out, “I didn’t, I’m not interested… no, why is it a boyfriend? You’re dead.”

[Dumbass, you weren’t injured, right?]

“You’re the dumbass.” Jian Rong sneered coldly. “I wasn’t injured. With that tiny physique, he wouldn’t be able to hurt me even if I gave him ten knives. If someone hadn’t stopped me, I would’ve shown that grandson…”

[Stop! Please watch your wording! It’s not that someone stopped you, it’s that someone carried you away.]

[Thanks for the invite. I was there at the scene, and I witnessed with my own eyes Road picking up the little dumbass like he was lifting a chick.]

[If I hadn’t seen the video before, Dad would’ve almost believed what this dumbass was saying.]

[A full-grown man, effortlessly carried away by someone else. If I were you, I would be too embarrassed to bring this up again…]

[Excuse me, if I get a knife and stab myself, will God Lu carry me??]

[Who said God Lu was going to retire this year again? There’s no way God Lu would’ve been able to kick like that without some basic training, his body must be in a better state than who knows how many other pro players.]

[Why don’t you take a look at your own physique first, how do you have the nerve to say someone else has a tiny physique??]

[Heard some internal news, you and God Lu are going to be penalized???]

[No way no way, you're even gonna be punished for this? Then what did you want my son to do in that original situation? Stand up straight and proper, and after getting stabbed, thank that person?]

What kind of strange people were the water friends in his livestream room? They even had access to that sort of internal news?

"What about my physique?" Jian Rong was wearing a loose shirt with half-length sleeves today. Right after he said that, he tugged up his sleeve and crooked his arm, flexing his muscles for the camera. "If this fist of mine lands, you all can just find me later today in Shanghai's police reports."

[……]

[Stop flexing stop flexing you're so embarrassing]

[WTF, his arm is even thinner than my wrist, *laoniang*[3] isn't eating dinner tonight]

Jian Rong had enough streaming experience to easily change the topic of conversation.

LoL's icon on the taskbar was flashing the entire time; someone was messaging him in the game.

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Duo Q?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: No sorry, going to practice in sandbox mode]

[Kongkong: Bro, you good? Duo Q?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: Good, no to Q, you're a mid laner can you not always ask me to duo Q? Get a life.]

[I'm Qiuqiu[4] You QAQ: Soft, want to play together?]

When the barrage saw that message, it exploded.

[Shit shit shit, how do you have Qiuqiu added as a friend?!]

[My goddess?! My fucking worlds are colliding.]

[Qiuqiu is like nobility, dumbass you're not deserving.]

[Who's Qiuqiu?]

[Female celebrity Ji Qiushi ah. At last year's anniversary celebration, she led a team as the celebrity representative and played with a bunch of retired pro players. She also used Miss Fortune to get a legendary kill.]

[She's a true goddess. She only ever filmed one movie, and after becoming a film empress, she went back to school. And she's a bona fide LoL player, she's been in Diamond for a few consecutive seasons now.]

[Many LoL pro players all follow her Weibo, and a few of them have even admitted that she's their goddess. Last time when Fighting Tiger's Da Niu ran into Qiuqiu in ranked, he begged to be added as a friend, but he wasn't successful. Yet here she is asking Soft to duo Q…]

[Son, Dad has acknowledged this daughter-in-law.]

[Ah… but in my eyes, my son is already taken ah…]

Jian Rong only remembered who this person was once he glanced at the barrage.

He typed—

[R-ong: No sorry, going to practice in sandbox mode]

[I'm Qiuqiu You QAQ: Okay.]

"I don't know her, we haven't talked before. Shiliu was the one who told me to add her as a friend." Jian Rong looked at the questions on the screen and frowned. "Also, didn't I already write it in my stream title? I'm practicing last hitting today, if you think it's boring, you're welcome to go watch another stream."

After Jian Rong said that, he opened sandbox mode and was about to enter it.

Buzz—

[TTC · Road: Duo Q a bit?]

Closed sandbox mode, created a party lobby, invited friend TTC · Road.

Jian Rong accomplished that series of actions in less than five seconds.

As soon as Lu Boyuan entered the lobby, Jian Rong warned him in advance, "I'm streaming."

"I know, it's fine." Lu Boyuan selected his roles.

Jian Rong was startled. “You’re playing support?”

Lu Boyuan: “Mn. I’m a little sleepy, just going to muddle through a game first.”

Jian Rong let out an “oh.” The moment before they entered the queue, he secretly switched his second choice from the “*top laner*” role to “*ADC*.”

[???]

[“Practicing last hitting today”???]

[Damn, you didn’t go when Qiuqiu asked you, yet Road just has to crook his finger and you even create a lobby? Are you still a man??]

[Didn’t you fucking say that playing ADC in this meta is the same as being someone else’s son??]

[Thank you thank you I’m shipping it.]

[Like hell you straight guys would understand!!!]

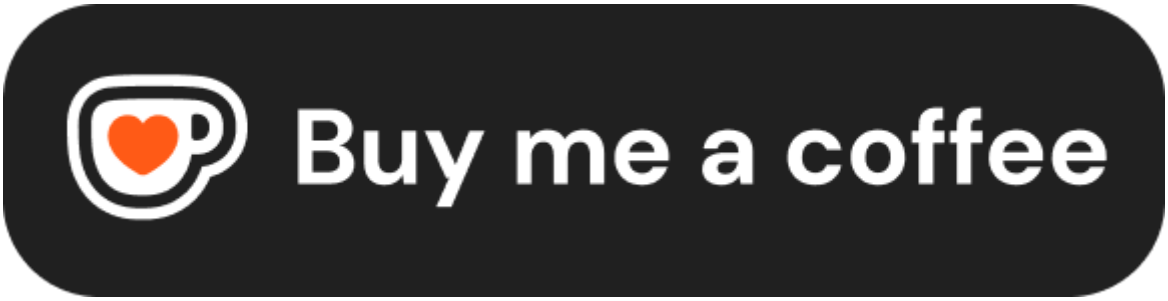
[I don’t care! I’ll even concede if the dumbass bans me from speaking! I’m going to shout it out loud today no matter what! Soft definitely likes Road!!!]

Translation Notes

1. *A frankly kind of complicated meme – the original was the equivalent of a Chinese acronym but it sounds too ridiculous in English, so I just translated the actual meaning. The line is originally said by one of*

those pretentious CEO-type characters who can make a huge corporation go bankrupt just like that ^

2. *This is a little confusing – since he's a 'small-scale banker,' he personally gambles against the people he's betting with, so if the other party gambles that TTC will win, that means the banker loses money if TTC wins* ^
3. *Laoniang = female equivalent for laozi (kinda arrogant way of saying 'this old man/woman', implying hierarchy)* ^
4. *Her username is a pun but I have no brain cells to come up with a good pun right now – Qiuqiu here means 'sphere/ball', and it's her (nick)name, but it's also a homophone for 'begging/pleading,' which means the username should be "I'm Begging You QAQ" (subbed for Qiuqiu instead). If anyone has any good puns feel free to comment them lol!* ^



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ICDI Chapter 63: You ganked my ADC so many times, what did I ever do to you?

While they were still in queue, Lu Boyuan's phone chimed.

He exited the streaming app open on his phone and went to check his messages. Ever since he made a visit to Doufu's livestream room on his main account some time ago, Ding-*ge* would periodically remind him to use his side account.

[Ding-*ge*: Don't practice for too long, we still have a practice match later. Keep in mind the doctor's recommended training time.]

Lu Boyuan replied with an "*I know*," and the game just happened to match them in.

[TTC · Road joined the lobby.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay joined the lobby.]

[I'm Qiuqiu You QAQ joined the lobby.]

It was the name that was just on the barrage.

Lu Boyuan was about to reopen the streaming app, but then he hesitated for a half a second before he locked his phone and set it down on the table, directly logging into StarTV on his computer instead.

Upon entering the lobby, the first thing Jian Rong did was check his role.

Lu Boyuan got support, and he got ADC.

Jian Rong was satisfied. Seeing that he was fifth to pick, he took the chance to glance at the barrage. “What ADC should I play?”

[Soft definitely likes Road]

[Soft definitely likes Road]

[Got here late, what’s going on? What did the dumbass do to Road now? Forget it, I’ll just follow along Soft definitely likes Road]

[Hahahahaha you and Qiuqiu crashed cars]

[What’s up with TTC? Pine and Xiao Bai act like this, and you two do too?? Perhaps Qian-*ge* will become your team’s only straight guy.]

[Soft definitely likes Road, but Road likes me :)!]

Jian Rong was startled. “What kind of nonsense are you guys spouting…”

Jian Rong felt a baseless rush of guilt surge over him, and his heart was beating somewhat quickly. He was about to turn his head and sneak a peek at Lu Boyuan when an exaggerated special effect for entering a livestream room floated across the top of his screen—

[Guardian TTC · Road has entered the livestream room.]

[TTC · Soft has enabled a stream-wide speaking ban.]

[TTC · Soft has cleared the screen.]

Despite being in this industry for so many years, Jian Rong had never used these two functions before, so his actions were a little slow.

He switched back to the game in a panic, his gaze traveling around wildly.

Why did Lu Boyuan suddenly enter his livestream room?

…did he see those weird comments?

It was like Lu Boyuan read his mind, as he explained evenly, “Xiao Bai said that the icons for max-level accounts look nice, so I came here to idle for a bit.”

StarTV had viewer rankings; the longer a viewer watched a stream, the higher their rank would be. The icon for a max-level account was a tiny purple star, and it did indeed look nice.

However—there were simply way, way too many icons following behind Lu Boyuan’s username. Even if his account was max-level, the little star would still end up being squeezed by the other icons into the ellipsis at the very end.

Xiao Bai overheard what Lu Boyuan said, and he instantly turned around to issue a passionate invitation. “*Ge*, how about you come and idle in my livestream room? I’ll serve you well with good tea made with good water.”

He was joking. No matter which stream his *ge*’s livestream account stayed in, the fans who followed him would all be notified. How could this be considered hanging up an idling sign? This was clearly hanging up the biggest billboard.

Lu Boyuan randomly banned a champion. “Doesn’t Pine idle in your livestream room every day?”

“I’ve already sucked all his fans dry a long time ago.” After Xiao Bai said that, he saw Pine, who was sitting next to him, open the streaming platform. “P-baby, whatcha doing? Are you gonna stream… hey, why are you unfollowing my livestream room!”

Pine said: “Shut up, I don’t want to talk to you right now.”

Xiao Bai rambled, “I was kidding! I was just trying to trick *ge* into idling in my livestream room, and after that I can go and idle in your stream. Wouldn’t the two of us be sharing my *ge*’s fans then… first follow me back again, hurry up.”

The corner of Lu Boyuan’s mouth quirked up. He looked at the fifth slot of their team, who had remained unresponsive for a while now, and reminded, “Ban a champion.”

“Oh.” Jian Rong snapped out of it and selected his customary ‘none’ ban. “Which ADC should I play?”

“Anything works.” Lu Boyuan modified his runes. “Play whatever you want.”

“Why don’t you ever ask me something like that when we duo queue together?” Xiao Bai ran into a dead end with Pine and ended up dejectedly seeking out Jian Rong to chatter away at.

Jian Rong was puzzled. “What’s the point of me asking you that when you’re a support?”

Xiao Bai nodded. “Great. The fans in the stream all overheard that, he looks down on supports, he discriminates in the workplace.”

The duration of the livestream room's stream-wide speaking ban could be adjusted. Jian Rong wasn't able to go to the settings at the moment, so the system banned comments for two minutes by default.

As a result, two minutes later, the water friends came back to life.

[Not only does he look down on supports, he also looks down on ADCs. He said that in his eyes, these two roles are basically walking ATMs.]

[Before, who was it that said enabling a stream-wide speaking ban was admitting your cowardice? You should change your name, you shouldn't be called Jian Rong anymore, it should be Jian Song[1].]

[Enabling a stream-wide speaking ban as soon as Road enters the stream? Feeling guilty?]

[Amending it: Soft is definitely secretly in love with Road]

[Road doesn't go to his own livestream room, and instead idles or appears in Soft's streams all the time, don't tell me…]

[Can Soft's dads and moms not implicate Road? Can Soft stop dragging in his teammates to sell rot? Road really is straight, Road and Tang Qin are a match made in heaven.]

[Road is straight, that's true, but there is nothing going on between him and Host Tang.]

[Soft is definitely secretly in love with Road! If you enable a stream-wide speaking ban again then it's the same as you silently acknowledging it!!!]

“You all are so annoying, stop making things up… who’s selling rot?!” Jian Rong ruffled his hair furiously. Watching as the barrage grew more and more lively, he guiltily glanced at Lu Boyuan’s name, which was sitting on the livestream room’s VIP list. He lowered his voice a bit. “I was originally going to practice last hitting. If my teammate comes, then we’re duo queueing to practice, is there a problem?”

[Mhm, TTC’s mid laner and jungler duo Q’ing together in the bot lane, one playing support and the other playing ADC. It really is for the sake of practicing, hah, you all better not say anything.]

[You didn’t sell rot, you two are real.]

[Does Road read the barrage? Could you look at my son’s heart, the one that’s suffering through a bitter secret love.]

Jian Rong couldn’t resist. At the speed of light, he whipped his head around to peek at Lu Boyuan’s screen.

Very good, Lu Boyuan only had LoL open on his computer.

Jian Rong heaved a sigh of relief. When he thought about it, he realized it made sense; Lu Boyuan rarely even read his own stream’s barrage.

He gave his ultimatum. “If you all keep commenting BS like this, I’m going to stop the stream.”

[Damn, threatening your dad??]

[This is my first time witnessing a streamer who uses ‘stop the stream’ as a way to threaten the viewers. I’ve been enlightened.]

[He’s getting nervous he’s getting nervous he’s getting nervous!!]

[Bros, stop spamming, this dumbass really would fucking stop the stream.]

After confirming that Lu Boyuan wasn’t looking at the barrage, Jian Rong was finally able to check out the team composition for this game.

When Lu Boyuan said he was going to ‘muddle through a game,’ he meant it. He picked an enchanter support[2], Janna.

Jian Rong was in the middle of contemplating which champion he should play when their teammate suddenly spoke.

[I’m Qiuqiu You QAQ: Soft, do you want mid? I can give it to you.]

Jian Rong blinked. “We crashed cars?”

[You just realized??]

[Let me just ask: do you feel embarrassed yet.]

Jian Rong, who frequently refused duo queue invitations from in-game friends, didn’t feel like there was anything to be embarrassed about.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: No, you can play it.]

Qiuqiu didn’t say anything else and chose Syndra, which actually matched well with her ID[3].

Jian Rong dithered for quite some time before he finally picked Jhin.

Only once the loading screen finished and they entered the game did Jian Rong realize that the other team's jungler was XIU. MFG's bot lane duo was also on the other team, playing the bot lane.

[[All] PUDXIU: When did you start playing support too? You carrying a little kiddo to play in the bot lane?]

Lu Boyuan typed lazily.

[[All] TTC · Road: He's carrying me]

[[All] PUDXIU: ……?]

Perhaps because Road had never once been carried by someone to victory in his entire five year-long professional career, in other people's eyes, those three words seemed exceptionally affectionate.

Jian Rong repeatedly reread that message a few times before he said honestly, "…my ADC is average, Diamond-level at the most."

"It's fine." Lu Boyuan's Janna continued to follow behind Jian Rong. "My support is also average."

Jian Rong very rarely displayed any weakness; if he said that his ADC was average, then it was average. In recent years, the ADC nerfs were truly tragic, and they also had to coordinate with the supports, so it wasn't easy for them to carry. Back when he used to stream, he never liked to play ADC.

On the other hand, Lu Boyuan's "*average*" evidently didn't quite have the same meaning as Jian Rong's.

Lu Boyuan was playing an enchanter support, yet he gave off the imposing aura of a mid laner.

Their opponent was playing Leona, a champion with hard CC. After being poked several times by Lu Boyuan's W skill, they finally couldn't hold back anymore upon reaching level 5, and they flashed forward to daze Lu Boyuan. Unexpectedly, the wind underneath Lu Boyuan's feet, which had been accumulating for a few seconds, slowly swept outwards—just as Leona was halfway through her flash, she was knocked into the air by Lu Boyuan.

With that kind of awareness—never mind the barrage, even MFG's support returned back underneath the tower and sent an "*amazing*" in the map-wide chat.

After recalling to base, Lu Boyuan said, "Be careful from now on, XIU is going to start ganking."

Jian Rong said okay.

Sure enough, as soon as XIU's Nocturne hit level 6, he headed down.

When XIU used his ult and rushed out, only Jian Rong was under the tower. Lu Boyuan was still some distance behind.

The binding skill that Jian Rong tossed out was successfully blocked by XIU's spell shield. He clenched his teeth. "Don't come, their mid laner is here too."

Lu Boyuan didn't respond. Instead, he stored up a gust of wind on the spot and charged to Jian Rong's side using his flash, before he used his W to slow the enemies and used his ult to blow them away.

XIU instantly flashed, wanting to forcefully kill off Jian Rong, but then he saw the wind that Lu Boyuan had charged up a few seconds earlier gently sweep towards him—knocking XIU and his team's support into the air simultaneously.

Jian Rong seized the opportunity to follow up with damage. Not only was XIU unable to kill Jian Rong, he was nearly done away with himself. In the end, he pitifully slipped into the jungle with a thread of health remaining.

[This Janna is way too frightening…]

[I tied my wife down in front of the computer so that she can watch and learn.]

[Thankfully God Lu is playing support, if he was the jungler, wouldn't XIU already cease to exist? XIU is becoming more and more trash this season, when is he going to retire?]

[That wave wasn't XIU's fault, OK? It was because MFG's bot lane didn't coordinate well, Leona didn't tank the tower even after failing to land her daze, she's purely sleepwalking.]

XIU suffered a loss that wave, and consequently, he came to the bot lane again and again, with the mid laner often right behind him as well.

Lu Boyuan performed beautifully once more, and after he sacrificed himself to forcibly protect Jian Rong, XIU couldn't help but type in the chat.

[[All] PUDXIU: Can you stop blasting me all the time with that wind of yours? Can't you blast it at someone else? You trying to get revenge for a personal grudge or what.]

[[All] TTC · Road: You ganked my ADC so many times, what did I ever do to you?]

In this game, Jian Rong had been miserably ganked over and over, and his face was gloomy the entire time.

When he saw that message, he stared at his gray screen blankly for a few seconds—then he propped his left elbow up on the computer desk and covered his mouth very lightly with his hand, before he started to silently peruse the shop.

[Do you think I can't tell that you're smiling just because you covered your mouth?]

[Damn, what's the difference between you two and those blasted couples who take over the bot lane???]

[Little noob, you still have the nerve to smile with a score of 1/4/4? Aren't you ashamed?]

"What's there to be ashamed about." Jian Rong replied with conviction, "If my ADC could beat up MFG's bot lane while PUD's jungler is continuously ganking me, then does MFG's bot lane even need to keep playing?"

This game ended at thirty-five minutes. The bot lane was stubbornly ganked by the enemy the whole time, and the other two lanes hadn't done particularly well either, so naturally Jian Rong lost.

"Continue." Lu Boyuan checked on XIU, who was currently in queue, and changed his preselected role back to jungler. He said, "I'll help you get those points back."

Unfortunately, they didn't run into XIU again in the next game. However, that "I'm Qiuqiu You QAQ" ended up matching with them once more; she got ADC this time.

In this match, Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan were playing as the mid laner and jungler respectively. Jian Rong was ganked too oppressively in the last game, so this time he played extremely diligently. On top of that, Lu Boyuan frequently dropped by the mid lane, successfully ganking the enemy mid laner not even fifteen minutes in.

After getting a drake with Lu Boyuan, the bot lane just happened to start fighting. Jian Rong controlled LeBlanc and headed down, beautifully securing a double kill and rescuing the low-health Qiuqiu at the same time.

[I'm Qiuqiu You QAQ: Thank you.]

Jian Rong answered casually.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: It was on the way]

They won this game easily; the other team chose to surrender at twenty-four minutes.

Right after they returned to the post-game stats page, Jian Rong received a new in-game message from a friend.

[I'm Qiuqiu You QAQ: Soft, let's add each other on WeChat.]

Jian Rong had just typed out a "*no thanks*."

[I'm Qiuqiu You QAQ: After all, we're going to be collaborating together in the future, so this way we can communicate with each other and talk it over.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: What collaboration?]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: We can talk about it when the time comes, I'm streaming right now, not convenient]

[Dammit, it's just a WeChat, all you have to do is add her and be done with it, why do you have so much to say!!]

[This is Qiuqiu, do you know who Qiuqiu is? Before rejecting her, I beg that you search for some pictures of her on Baidu first, okay?]

[If you're a man, you wouldn't reject her, would you?]

[He is a man, but he's bent.]

Jian Rong ignored them. In any case, Lu Boyuan was only idling in the stream and couldn't see their comments, so they could say whatever they wanted to.

After closing the chat with Qiuqiu, Jian Rong entered the matching queue again.

They queued for a fairly long time. Lu Boyuan leaned back in his chair and picked up his phone to reply to XIU's texts.

[PUD, XIU: The world's #1 Janna, when will you have time to play support for me?]

[R: When you're dreaming at night.]

[PUD, XIU: All right.]

[PUD, XIU: Our mid laner created another side account to watch your team's mid laner stream. He's learned a few things about streaming, he even knows that you can get some streamers' WeChats by spamming gifts now. If I hadn't stopped him, your team's mid laner would be expressing thanks for the gifts at this point.]

"Captain?" In his headphones, Jian Rong hesitantly called out to him. "Still playing?"

They had matched into a game, but because Lu Boyuan hadn't clicked 'accept,' they had returned to the lobby again.

"Yes." Lu Boyuan put down his phone. "I was thinking about something just now."

After they entered the queue once again, Jian Rong glanced at the barrage out of habit.

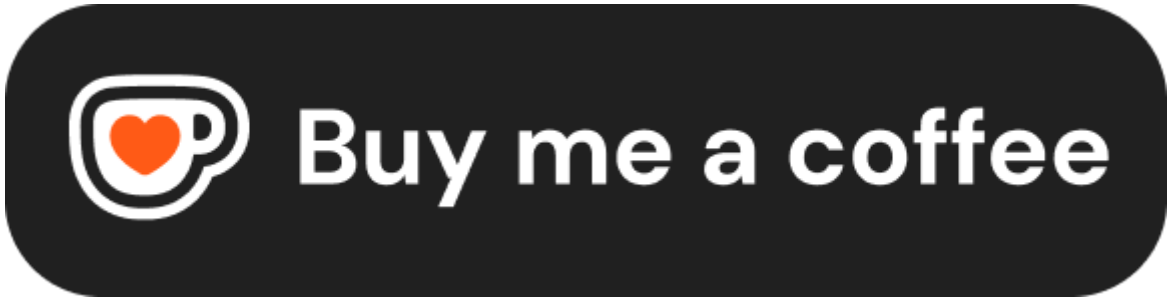
An extremely boring comment streaked across—[What were you thinking about?]

Jian Rong ignored it, wanting to find a comment to argue with.

“I was thinking.” Lu Boyuan really was sleepy. He had woken up bright and early to make a trip to the hospital, so he wasn’t able to get many hours of sleep at all. As a result, his voice contained a lazy cadence to it. “Why are there so many people who want to add our mid laner on WeChat.”

Translation Notes

1. *Song (怂) = coward* ^
2. *Enchanter supports = closest term I could find to the Chinese term (soft supports). They focus on healing and directly aiding/defending their teammates, and often lack damage themselves* ^
3. *As mentioned before, Qiuqiu’s name = sphere, and Syndra’s nickname is basically “sphere girl” in Chinese (she conjures a bunch of spheres in her attacks)* ^



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ICDI Chapter 64: .

Thank you to leasedtruck for the Ko-fi!

Jian Rong's mind went blank. He only knew how to mechanically ban a champion, pick his champion, change his runes.

Fortunately, those actions were practically muscle memory by now, or else he might've done something god-tier like ban LeBlanc, pick Teemo, take Clarity as a summoner spell.

Lu Boyuan was still conversing with the barrage in Jian Rong's stream.

"Why aren't I streaming… too much work. Also, Soft is already streaming, so it's the same whether I do it or not."

[Yes yes yes you two are a duo husband package deal!!!]

[What's going on, I'm a R fan, but I also feel like something is a teensy bit weird?]

[Little dumbass, what's the matter? Only your hands are moving, even your eyes are motionless… are you frozen? Your soul left your body??]

[Dumbass your face is so red]

[His secret love has been discovered! Scream!! I'm embarrassed on behalf of my son!!!]

[It's not the same, I'd rather watch you stream by yourself! Is the team's management requiring you to help boost Soft's popularity? They're using their veteran members??]

[When will I be able to see Road and Tang Qin duo Q together QAQ]

"Nobody is requiring me to do anything, I was the one who asked him to queue together. Soft is extremely busy, so it's very hard for him to have time to carry me… Tang Qin? We won't queue together. It's not that I dislike her, it's…" Lu Boyuan chose his champion. "There isn't really a need."

Queueing with teammates was for the sake of practicing together. Queueing with pro players from other teams was for the sake of sounding out their strength. Queueing with female hosts… there truly wasn't a need for it.

"Enough, this is Soft's stream, so I won't be interacting anymore." Lu Boyuan minimized the stream window and glanced at the win rates of their other three teammates. They hadn't crashed cars with any pro players this time, but their teammates' win and play rates were all quite high. He controlled his champion and walked forward, saying, "Come with me, let's go and invade."

Jian Rong nodded and followed behind him. A moment passed before he remembered that they were sitting with their backs facing each other, so Lu Boyuan couldn't see him nodding. "…coming."

The barrage kept spamming "*blushing blushing blushing*," throwing Jian Rong's thoughts into turmoil. As he was recalling to base, he switched

windows and turned off his camera while saying, “You all are too annoying.”

In a twenty-three minute game, Jian Rong drank an entire cup of cold water.

Right as the game finished, the phone chimed on the dot. Jian Rong glanced down at it before he canceled their queue.

Lu Boyuan said, “What’s up.”

Jian Rong muted his stream mic before answering, “Ding-*ge* said that your hand is tired, he told you to go rest for a while.”

Ding-*ge*’s messages had been coming through from back then all the way until now. Lu Boyuan was already only reading it and not responding.

Lu Boyuan had always felt that “*practicing less for the purpose of preventing a hand injury*” was a paradox.

As a professional player, his only goal was to win. If he wanted to win, then he had to practice; the more proficient he became with practice, the stronger he would become. Wanting to achieve good scores without practicing: that was simply a preposterous fantasy.

What’s more, which pro player from the older generation didn’t have an injury? XIU and Da Niu’s injuries weren’t any less severe than his, but were they resting? Weren’t they still practicing for more than ten hours a day as usual?

Lu Boyuan didn’t think that his hands were any more precious than someone else’s. If he practiced for a long time, then of course they would

hurt, but it would be better after a night of sleep. He was well aware of the situation, he could endure it.

Lu Boyuan gave an “en.” “Two more games.”

Jian Rong didn’t start queueing.

Jian Rong’s LoL summoner icon was from the earliest batch of icons. The ship captain wore an adorable, astonished expression, and it was both somewhat outdated and oddly endearing at the same time.

Lu Boyuan stared at that icon for a few seconds, and his mood improved again. He asked, “Do you listen to him or do you listen to me?”

“You.” Jian Rong didn’t even think about it.

A beat later, he recalled Lu Boyuan’s hand, and he added, “But I’m tired… I want to rest for a bit.”

Lu Boyuan laughed upon hearing that.

The person who practiced the most every day, saying that he was tired after only logging onto his computer for less than three hours…

“Just teasing you.” Lu Boyuan left the party lobby. “Go ahead and keep playing.”

After exiting the game, Lu Boyuan took off his headphones and left the room, his team jacket draped over his shoulders.

“Stop looking, he’s already gone…”

Xiao Bai's voice dragged Jian Rong back. He wrenched his head around, his expression unhappy.

"I was just reading your barrage out loud." Xiao Bai immediately averted his gaze.

Jian Rong didn't say anything. He switched back to the stream and emphasized, "I didn't blush, the heating is turned up in the base, so it's a little hot—if you don't believe me, then forget it. Is Dad begging you all to believe me?"

Xiao Bai, who was sitting next to him, couldn't help but glance down at his own jacket.

These days, the temperature outside hovered at around 17 degrees Celsius[1]. Didn't their team's base turn off the heating a long time ago?

[Enough, don't say anything else, your sexual orientation became very clear the moment you rejected Qiuqiu's request to add each other on WeChat.]

Jian Rong: "I don't want to add strangers, this has nothing to do with my sexual orientation. Stop making stuff up… It doesn't matter if I like guys or girls, it's not as if I like you all."

[This is the kind of attitude you have towards your dad?]

[OK, unfollowing you for a day.]

[We know you like Road already, stop emphasizing it.]

“I’m stopping the stream—like hell I’m feeling guilty, the practice match is about to begin, I don’t have time to stream. Turning it off now.”

Once Jian Rong turned off the stream, Xiao Bai asked, “…isn’t our practice match at 6 PM?”

Jian Rong said, “Mn.”

Xiao Bai: “It’s only 3:30 right now.”

Jian Rong turned to look at him. “So?”

Xiao Bai really wanted to tell Jian Rong that his fierce expression truly made him seem like he was shamed into feeling angry, but he was also afraid that he would be beaten up. As a result, he smiled. “So how about we mid laner and support play some ranked together, and build up our bridge of friendship?”

“No thanks, you can go build a bridge with Pine.” Jian Rong opened sandbox mode. “I’m practicing last hitting today.”

—

A few days later, it was the day of a competitive match again.

Lu Boyuan resumed his position as a starter today. He was sitting next to Ding-*ge*, discussing the pick/ban phase that was going to happen soon.

Perhaps the previous incident had created a shadow over the others, because right as they arrived at the competition stadium, Yuan Qian and

Xiao Bai both pressed up against the windows to see what was going on at the back entrance.

Xiao Bai said, “Reporting—there’s a short and skinny man wearing a green hat, standing furtively at the very front of the crowd!”

Ding-*ge* said, “That’s a security guard, his outfit is just obstructed by the other people.”

Yuan Qian’s gaze roamed around. “That tall and burly person doesn’t seem like someone particularly decent either.”

Ding-*ge* was helpless. “That’s a fan, don’t you see that he’s holding up a support banner for Pine?”

Once the car came to a halt, Jian Rong disembarked with his bag slung over one shoulder and walked towards the arena, head lowered.

He had just taken a single step when he felt someone stand next to him.

This time, the LPL staff had set up a crowd control barrier for them. The car was parked next to the entrance; the stadium wall was to their left, and the fans were to their right.

Lu Boyuan ducked his head and walked next to Jian Rong, silently separating him from the crowd.

They played three rounds total today. The first game they won effortlessly, but in the second game Yuan Qian was senselessly targeted, as the other team’s mid laner, jungler, and support went to the top lane over and over

to mess around. Xiao Bai was playing a soft support, so it wasn't easy for him to roam and help out. This led to the top lane collapsing and Yuan Qian's tanky champion being extremely weak in the late game, causing him to get killed the moment he engaged a team fight. Very unfortunately, they lost the second game.

In the third game, Jian Rong completely carried with LeBlanc, and TTC won yet another spring season match.

"Six consecutive wins!" After they returned to the base, Ding-*ge* said, beaming, "Keep it up, let's aim to advance into the playoffs undefeated!"

"I didn't play well in the second game today, or else we would've ended much earlier." Yuan Qian sighed. "My fault."

Lu Boyuan was sitting on the sofa. "Don't get ahead of yourself, we can divide the blame when we lose."

"*Pei pei pei*, don't say something ominous like that." Ding-*ge* put the sliced fruit onto the table.

They had just finished eating dinner, and Jian Rong was scrolling through Weibo on his iPad. In the past two days, his Weibo was packed full of mentions and private messages linked to some strange posts. There were photos, written posts, and even some videos. The only similarity between them was that their contents all included him and Lu Boyuan.

The post at the very top was: [SB Scum-na[2], if you have the balls then censor me again? [gif]]

Jian Rong casually clicked on the gif.

The first few seconds consisted of a landscape picture. Jian Rong frowned and waited for two seconds, but then his patience ran out. He was about to exit the page when he saw the gif suddenly change into a drawing.

Jian Rong stared at it and instantly froze.

Even Jian Rong, who had never once watched a single porn video in his eighteen years of life, could tell that this was an erotic drawing.

Judging from the IDs on the back of the team uniforms and the hair colors, the main characters were freaking him and Lu Boyuan too.

When Lu Boyuan reached over, Jian Rong reacted exactly as if he had been caught watching porn, and he subconsciously covered his iPad by bringing it close to his body.

Lu Boyuan: "…"

Lu Boyuan glanced at his iPad. "Do you want a strawberry?"

Jian Rong nodded stiffly.

Lu Boyuan pinched the little green leaves at the top of the strawberry and raised it up.

Maybe he had been given a scare by the exaggerated position depicted in the drawing. Either way, for a few seconds, Jian Rong's mind went blank.

As a result, by the time he snapped out of it again, he had already leaned forward and bitten down on the strawberry that Lu Boyuan was holding. Meanwhile, everyone else around them had stopped talking, and they were all looking at the two of them with strange expressions.

Lu Boyuan also paused for half a second. His gaze shifted ever so slightly before he said mildly, "Finish it."

Let me die.

That was the only thought left in Jian Rong's head as he leaned in and finished off the remaining half of the strawberry.

"You feeding him?" Ding-*ge* was the first to look away. "Oh right, Jian Rong, the team accepted a brand endorsement for you. It's for that mechanical keyboard I was telling you about before, I'll forward you the contract tonight. The legal department has been checking over the clauses in the contract for many days now, so you can relax. Some time from now, you'll probably have to film an advertisement and take some marketing photos."

"Amazing." Xiao Bai took a bite out of a strawberry. "You've only been in the team for a few months and haven't even finished the regular season yet, but you already have a solo brand endorsement."

Yuan Qian said, "I only got my first solo brand endorsement after playing for three years… never mind. Once you get your endorsement fee, you should treat us to a meal, right?"

"Sure." Jian Rong hugged his iPad like he was hugging his keyboard. He hesitated briefly. "If the product doesn't sell well, I won't have to take

responsibility, will I?"

Ding-*ge* laughed when he heard that. "You won't, but you don't have to worry. This manufacturer has been collaborating with us for a long time, you're just being the ambassador for a new product series coming out. Xiao Lu is the ambassador for the headphones from this series. Also, you're not the only ambassador this time, there's also a female celebrity…"

Xiao Bai instantly remembered something. "Qiuqiu?!"

Ding-*ge* nodded. "Correct. Since it's a couple edition, Jian Rong is endorsing the blue and white model, while she's endorsing the pink and white one."

Before Jian Rong could say anything, Xiao Bai grabbed onto his shoulder. "Jian Rong! Help me get Qiuqiu's WeChat!"

Jian Rong swallowed a strawberry. "You like her?"

"Ah." Xiao Bai paused. "Not really, I just want to add a beauty's WeChat."

Jian Rong was too lazy to bother with him anymore.

"Speaking of which, Qiuqiu actually seems to like Xiao Rong quite a bit." Ding-*ge* suddenly said, "I heard that originally, she was hesitating over whether to accept this advertisement or not, but after she found out the other partner invited was Soft, she agreed the very next day."

Lu Boyuan threw the leftover leaves that Jian Rong hadn't eaten into the trash. Upon hearing that, he froze briefly and rubbed his fingers together

before he sat back in his seat again.

Yuan Qian was amused. “Is that real or fake??”

“Rumors, rumors.” Ding-*ge* said, “Why does everyone look so shocked? In any case, Xiao Rong is still a little rookie male god in the esports circle, it’s very normal for him to have fans.”

Jian Rong had no interest in being a male god. If he could earn money by accepting these endorsements, then he would take them.

After eating and drinking their fill, the five of them prepared to go upstairs for their practice match. They were playing against the second team tonight, and it could be considered as helping train the second team.

Just as Jian Rong stood up from the sofa, someone tugged on his clothing.

Lu Boyuan’s eyes swept downwards toward the object he was holding in his arms. “Going to practice while holding that?”

Hearing that, not only did Jian Rong’s grip not loosen, he ended up hugging it even tighter instead. Even though the screen was locked, he still wanted to hold it; he still felt guilty.

He didn’t know what he was feeling guilty over. It wasn’t like he was the one who freaking drew that erotic art!

“I’m… going to put it in my room.” Jian Rong said, “You guys create the party lobby first, I’ll be there soon.”

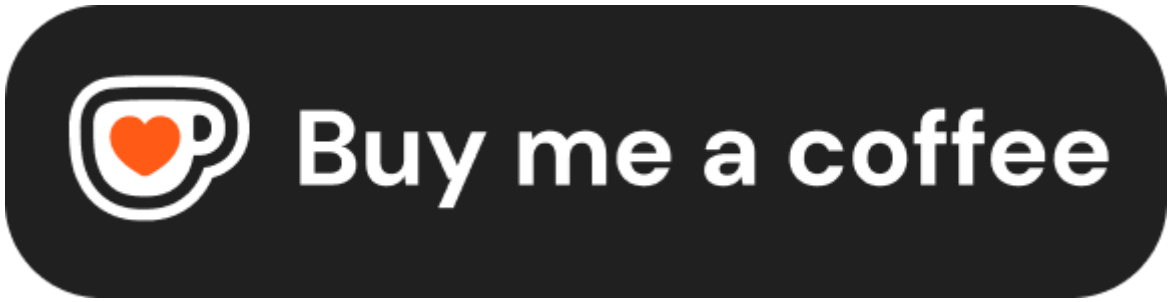
Lu Boyuan looked at him like he wanted to say something. A moment later, he still ended up releasing Jian Rong. “Mn, hurry up.”

Translation Notes

1. *~62 degrees Fahrenheit* ^
2. *SB = sha bi (傻逼) = dumbass. Scum-na is referring to Sina (company that owns Weibo)* ^

Yan: All the comments for this chapter in the raws were basically saying “so… where the drawing at?” lmao. Also a note about the chapter title – you might have noticed it’s just a “.” this time! The author ended up getting hit by censorship :’) they even had to change the Chinese title of ICDI from 我行让我上 to 我行让我来 (basically same meaning, but the 上 is often used euphemistically in Chinese to imply ‘doing’ someone, though it wasn’t used with that intention in this case at all).

A lot of chapter descriptions ended up being deleted if they were too suggestive as well, so going forward there’ll be a fair number of “./!/?” titles. Some of the titles I’ve already translated were also edited, but I won’t be going back and changing those. A few of the future chapters even got locked for censorship, but don’t worry, I’ll be using non-censored raws for those chapters ahaha



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ICDI Chapter 65: As long as he didn’t act awkward, Lu Boyuan would be the one to feel awkward.

Thank you to Kitty and Anonymous for the Ko-fis!

TTC’s second team wasn’t doing very well in the current LDL spring season, so the second team’s coach sought out Ding-*ge* to discuss it numerous times. After Ding-*ge* solicited the agreement of the first team’s members, he finally set up this practice match with the second team.

After the second team’s members entered the lobby, they collectively greeted the first team in the chat, calling every single one of them *ge*.

[TTC-K Xiao Ya: Rong-*ge*, good evening.]

Everyone else laughed when they saw Jian Rong being addressed as *ge*.

[TTC · Qian: Don’t call him that, Xiao Rong probably isn’t even as old as you all are.]

[TTC-K Xiao Ya: …then how should I address him 0.0]

[TTC · Bye: ‘Esports male god.’]

Jian Rong ignored Xiao Bai’s deafening laughter in his headphones and expressionlessly typed.

[Just Watch My Gameplay: You can just call me Soft]

[TTC-K Xiao Ya: Okay!]

After entering the game, Xiao Bai pulled up the scoreboard out of habit and voiced the problem that he had been dying to ask about all along. “Jian Rong, look at your game ID.”

Jian Rong’s thoughts were focused on that iPad in his room. “What’s wrong with my ID.”

Xiao Bai said, “It doesn’t match at all with ours.”

Jian Rong’s competition account was named TTC · Soft, but he had never changed the usernames of his own LoL accounts, including all his side accounts and his Korean account.

Jian Rong originally wanted to say “*we’re teammates not a married couple why do we have to match*,” but then when he saw his own ID placed next to Lu Boyuan’s, he felt like it was indeed out of place.

It was just an ID. A name change cost only a few dozen yuan, and Jian Rong wasn’t that stingy. As a result, he asked, “Should I change it then?”

Lu Boyuan said, “No need.”

When Jian Rong heard that, he subconsciously glanced to the side out of the corner of his eyes. He couldn’t openly look over, so he could only see Lu Boyuan’s hand as it gripped his mouse.

His fingers were curled, and he appeared to be very relaxed.

Lu Boyuan spoke again. “No one will force you to change your ID, you can make it whatever you like.”

“It’s true that there isn’t such a rule in the team.” Ding-*ge* was standing behind them. “Before, it was because Xiao Lu chose this name on his new account, so the others also ended up changing their own IDs when they saw it.”

Jian Rong was startled. “New account?”

“Mn, at the time…” Ding-*ge* was about to say something but hesitated. Finally, he said, “In short, he created a new account.”

“The old account was used in an account-sealing bet with someone, and I lost, so I stopped using that account.” Lu Boyuan played it down. “After that, I just kept playing on my friend’s account, which had a lot of champions. I only created this account after joining the team. I was too lazy to come up with a name, which is why I used the team ID.”

Jian Rong was stunned, and he nearly missed a minion.

He actually didn’t know what to be more surprised about—

Lu Boyuan made an account-sealing bet with someone before?

And he freaking lost???

It wasn’t just Jian Rong; everyone else was astonished as well.

“So something like that happened before…” Yuan Qian was dumbfounded, and he focused on pretty much the same thing as Jian Rong. “You actually lost?”

“Isn’t it normal to lose a game?” Lu Boyuan effortlessly ganked the second team’s jungler. He seemed to recall something, and his lips quirked up. “It wasn’t that bad for me, that account didn’t have any skins. XIU’s account had all the skins and all the champions, it was the most impressive account in all those internet cafes… and it was gone just like that.”

Xiao Bai sucked in a breath through his teeth. “XIU was there too? So it was a 5v5 account-sealing bet? That exciting?”

Even Pine asked, “Why accept the account-sealing bet?”

Lu Boyuan went silent for two seconds. “I forget.”

It was something that happened quite a few years ago, and Lu Boyuan had long since forgotten the reason why he accepted the bet. He only remembered that back then, he had been brash and impulsive, agreeing to the bet without hesitation. In the end, when they had to seal their accounts, it felt like they were burying their wives. As soon as the five teenagers left the internet cafe, they went to hunker down at the corner of the street and smoke, and XIU was the one who had given them the cigarettes.

At the time, Lu Boyuan was fighting back against his dad, so he would play truant and skip class to hang out in internet cafes; he didn’t have a single cent on him.

Yuan Qian recalled something and chuckled. “I thought about it, and the old you… really was capable of doing something like this.”

Jian Rong spaced out while listening, his curiosity skyrocketing.

As long as this kind of curiosity made an appearance, it would be impossible to restrain. Jian Rong's mind was full of thoughts like—

What was the old Lu Boyuan like?

And what was the not yet eighteen years old Lu Boyuan like, the one who hadn't started playing competitively yet, the one who hadn't stood on a stadium stage yet?

Agreeing to an account-sealing bet, and losing to boot: that sort of thing was way too childish, and it was disgraceful too. Ding-*ge* couldn't help but interrupt them. "Enough, play properly, respect the second team's members, okay?"

"How are we disrespecting them?" Xiao Bai immediately said, "I'm playing properly, P-baby come get my heal."

Pine: "No thanks, recalling to base."

They played three games in the practice match, which they all won.

Just as Lu Boyuan exited the game client, his phone rang. He glanced at the caller ID before he stood up and answered it. "Hello."

"Bro." There was a lot of background noise on the other end, and XIU's voice blended into the wind. "You free? Come out and chat a bit? Oh... you just finished playing a match today, right? Forget it then."

Lu Boyuan could tell that his tone of voice wasn't right. He hesitated briefly and checked the time.

“Send me your location.”

It was the same barbeque stand as before.

XIU hadn’t ordered any barbeque, but he had ordered a few bottles of beer. By the time Lu Boyuan arrived, one bottle was already empty.

“You’re here, you’re way too slow.” When the seat next to him was pulled out, XIU didn’t even look up. He merely picked up an opened but untouched bottle of beer. “Drink a bit?”

“Wasted some time with Ding-*ge*.” Lu Boyuan rejected, “Not drinking. Don’t you have a match tomorrow?”

XIU knocked back a gulp. “It’s fine, as long as I don’t get drunk.”

Lu Boyuan sat there quietly. He knew clearly what was going on, and he asked bluntly, “They told you about the new jungler?”

“Mn.” XIU took a drag on his cigarette. “Just a few days after you told me, management came to discuss it with me.”

Lu Boyuan lifted his eyes. “What did they say.”

XIU clenched his teeth. “What else? They said they had signed a new jungler, and what happened next would depend on my spring season performance. If I play well, he’ll be my sub in the summer season. If I don’t play well… I’ll be his sub.”

At that point, XIU was already extremely fed up and angry, but he still had no choice but to keep his voice down. “Logically speaking, I didn’t perform

poorly in the last summer season, did I? We haven't lost a single game in the spring season yet, and though I haven't gotten MVP a lot, my jungle has never exploded before. My hand is injured, true, but I've never gone on break for it, nor have I ever missed a single practice match… and then what? Just because of this bullshit reason called 'youth,' I have to yield to someone else? What kind of fucking logic is this?!"

It was very illogical.

But this was just what it was like to play competitively.

XIU didn't perform poorly, but his hand injury was severe, and perhaps he wouldn't be able to go up and play one day. A developed esports club had to take care of everything, to prevent any accidents from occurring.

Lu Boyuan understood that, so XIU definitely understood it too.

But understanding something didn't mean that you could calmly accept it. XIU thought about it for two days, but he still felt suppressed and unwilling to give up.

"They've already signed the contract, that jungler moved into the base today." XIU said weakly, "I just want to know… how did you manage to put up with it? You're much stronger than me, but you still allowed that trainee kid to be your substitute, and you even let him play in the semifinals. If it were me… my mentality would've been completely shattered."

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and rubbed his fingers together without replying.

A long while later, just when XIU thought that he wasn't going to receive a response at all, Lu Boyuan finally said indifferently, "I didn't put up with it.

"Which is why I'm still playing." Lu Boyuan's voice was deep and low. "Concerning the substitute, management went around Ding-*ge* and came to talk it over with me. I also consented, but I made it clear in advance… I wouldn't be yielding my position. The person they found would either have to be stronger than me, or they would always stay as a substitute. Management agreed.

"Why else do you think they let me pick a substitute from among the trainees? They couldn't recruit anyone else.

"No registered professional player dared to come."

Lu Boyuan sneered. "Nobody felt like they could beat me, nor did they want to wait and endure until I retired."

XIU looked at him, stunned. Quite a while later, XIU ducked his head and laughed out loud.

He laughed for some time before he suddenly asked, "Do you still remember Ah-Yang? That mid laner who participated in the account-sealing bet with us before."

Lu Boyuan raised his eyebrows, indicating that he hadn't forgotten him.

"A while ago, he called me up and was sighing about how time doesn't stop for anyone. He talked about how that person who used to have to solo other people eight or ten times a day in the internet cafe back then,

cigarette hanging from his mouth, had now become the captain of a top team. He even praised you for being low-key and unflustered… bullshit, you still behave the same way as before." XIU chuckled and said, "The funniest thing was, the day after we finished chatting, the news about you kicking someone filled my entire Weibo."

Lu Boyuan laughed as well and tilted his head to the side, too lazy to bother with XIU.

Only after XIU brought that up did he remember to ask, "Oh right, did you have to face disciplinary action for it? After all, those LPL people are the strictest when it comes to regulations."

Lu Boyuan hummed. "Penalty."

"Not bad, at least it wasn't a competition ban." XIU asked again, "That little mid laner of yours was also penalized, right?"

"The same as me."

When Lu Boyuan said that, the corner of his mouth curled up.

XIU stared at him for a bit before his tense shoulders relaxed slightly. "You know, some of the devil's advocates weren't wrong. That person was already restrained by the security guards, he wouldn't be able to charge over, so why did you have to go and add that kick… you're not afraid of being banned from competing?"

No professional player wanted to be banned from competing. Lu Boyuan was the same.

Suffering for over ten hours every day in a practice room, wasn't it all for a chance to go on stage?

"I am." Lu Boyuan said mildly, "But I wasn't thinking that much."

XIU nodded and asked teasingly, "Secretly speaking up for Soft in the post-game interview, depositing money for him to pull skins, beating up someone on his behalf and getting the first disciplinary penalty of your five-year professional career… do all captains nowadays have to treat their team's newcomers like this in order to meet the standard?"

Lu Boyuan went silent for a few seconds, before he also laughed hearing that. "Who knows."

"It doesn't matter if other people know or not, the question is whether Soft knows." As XIU spoke, he handed Lu Boyuan a cigarette. "Have a stick. If you're discovered and fined, I'll pay for you."

Lu Boyuan didn't actually care whether he was fined, but having reached this point of the conversation, he did indeed want to smoke.

XIU lit the cigarette for him. The two most popular veteran junglers of the current LPL sat in front of the barbeque stand and started smoking together.

Before, XIU was only guessing. After all, he knew Lu Boyuan way too well; Lu Boyuan hadn't concealed his fondness for that kid, and it was too obvious.

He exhaled a mouthful of smoke. "What's Soft's attitude? Oh… what the hell am I asking, he listens to you the most. Even the cooking auntie in my team

knows that."

Lu Boyuan bit down on the end of his cigarette. At that moment, the person who normally appeared calm and collected had gained a bit of a bad boy aura. A long while later, he finally said, "I think… that the rose-colored glasses he looks at me through are too thick."

XIU scoffed. "Bullshit. What kid in the LPL doesn't look at you through rose-colored glasses? If I were to send out a questionnaire right now asking them which pro player they like the most, how many of them wouldn't pick you?"

It was a compliment, but Lu Boyuan didn't feel that happy to receive it.

Precisely because of this, Jian Rong interacted with him like a fan would with their idol, or an underclassman with their upperclassman. As for any other ways of thinking… Lu Boyuan wasn't able to tell at all.

If they kept talking about this, just one cigarette wouldn't be enough.

Lu Boyuan put out his cigarette. "Enough with that, let's keep talking about how you'll be smashed to death on the shore by the next wave."

XIU was dumbfounded for a moment, and the gloomy emotions that he had before coming here were completely swept away. "Damn, who the hell's gonna be smashed to death…"

By the time Lu Boyuan returned to the base, it was already almost two in the morning.

The light in the second floor practice room was still on. The others wouldn't practice for too long the night after a match, so the only one who could possibly be in the practice room was their team's new mid laner.

But their new mid laner wasn't actually practicing at that moment.

Jian Rong was wearing his headphones and taking advantage of the game queue time to watch a compilation video.

A water friend had edited together the video, which contained a variety of little clips taken from their team's matches. However, these clips… only featured him and Lu Boyuan.

It was paired with sweet and pleasant background music, and a few hearts would even pop up on the screen occasionally.

Jian Rong bit down lightly on his left thumb, watching the video as attentively as he did their match recordings. The sound in his headphones was turned up extremely high, so he only sensed that something wasn't quite right when a faint whiff of tobacco slipped into his nose.

He slowly turned his head.

Lu Boyuan's gaze was still focused on Jian Rong's computer screen. About two seconds passed before he finally cast his eyes downward to look at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong: "…"

Jian Rong rapidly exited the video-watching software, revealing the webpage that he had just finished perusing but hadn't closed yet.

It was a Baidu search. Written big and bold in the search box was—"*LPL player Road's early years experience*".

Countless smaller windows were opened next to the webpage. The webpages' summaries were respectively: "*Road debut photos*", "*Road's early period interview video (extremely blurry)*", and "*Listing all of Road's dating scandal partners*".

Jian Rong: "……"

Jian Rong's face burned red, and he expressionlessly closed the websites. He thought, as long as he didn't act awkward, Lu Boyuan would be the one to feel awkward.

Until Lu Boyuan's voice floated down: "Who was listed for my dating scandal partners?"

Fuck.

Jian Rong pressed his lips together, opened them, and pressed them together again. Then he gave up in despair and said, "I only remember Tang Qin, forgot the other people's names."

Lu Boyuan let out an "en." "It's fake, I've never been with anyone before."

"Oh." Jian Rong turned his head back around and frowned while he slowly and forcefully rubbed his own face. He didn't know how to explain why he

wasn't practicing this late at night and was instead here searching up his captain's personal affairs.

This was his first time doing something like this, and he ended up being caught red-handed too…

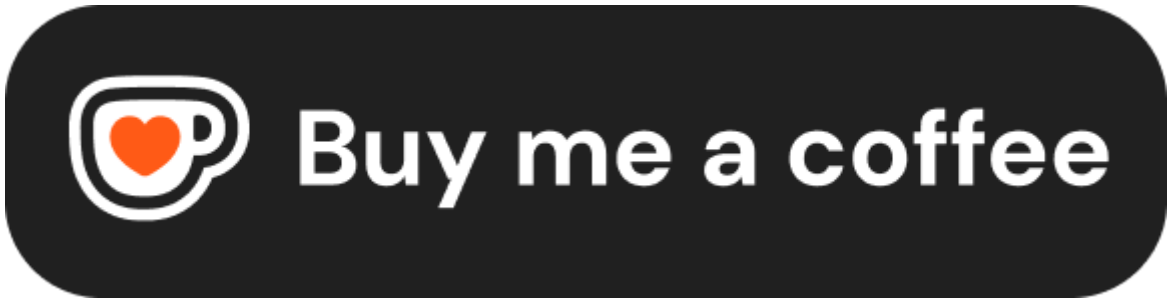
Lu Boyuan looked down at Jian Rong's completely scarlet ears, and he said, "In the future, you can ask me directly about anything you want to know. You don't need to waste time looking it up."

For a brief moment, Jian Rong couldn't tell if Lu Boyuan was angry, or if he was being serious.

But he found out the answer to that soon enough. Lu Boyuan's hand descended, sinking into his hair and ruffling it very gently.

"However, let me tell you in advance," Lu Boyuan paused for a second before continuing, "I'm not as good as you think I am."

Wei: Poor Jian Rong, he always gets caught by Lu Boyuan at the worst possible times LOL



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ICDI Chapter 66: I just like to pay fines.

Jian Rong actually hadn't really found anything in his search that night.

Lu Boyuan had made a name for himself too quickly. The first year he joined the team, he became the champion of the LSPL; the second year, he won Worlds, and he became the most legendary person in the entire professional league. At the time, the trainee system wasn't developed yet, and TTC's boss had unearthed Lu Boyuan and convinced him to join the team when he was still a solo queue king in the Korean server.

Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian both had pictures and even videos from back when they were trainees or playing in offline tournaments. Lu Boyuan didn't have any of that.

But his search wasn't completely fruitless either.

He managed to find a post on a certain Tieba from several years ago. Jian Rong had read the original poster's message numerous times before he finally understood it—

[Happened 2 see Road @ an internet cafe, dat super strong Road from the Korean server, sooo handsome \\(^o^)/, secretly took 1 pic of his back!]

Last year, the original poster had rediscovered this post—[Fuck, I just realized that this person is actually the current Road ah??!]

The image quality was way too poor, and at first glance it looked like a mosaic was overlaid across it. The photo was indeed only of his back, and

the background appeared to be an illegal internet cafe.

Lu Boyuan was wearing headphones, but probably because he felt like they were dirty, he had stuck tissues between the headphones and his ears. There was a cigarette between his fingers, and he was watching one of the earlier LPL matches on his computer.

Jian Rong had also found a photograph of everyone in TTC holding up the trophy during the LSPL finals.

In the picture, Xiao Bai was at least twelve kilograms lighter than he was now, and he looked delicate and silly; Yuan Qian's figure was the same as ever, tall and robust, and he even had some acne on his face; Pine hadn't joined the team yet, so he wasn't in the photo.

Lu Boyuan was standing in the middle, his bangs so long that they pricked his eyes a little. He wore an indifferent expression, which appeared extremely out of place compared to the beaming smiles of the people next to him.

This picture was a little different from what Jian Rong remembered, but in the end, many years had passed since then. At the time, Jian Rong wasn't even thirteen yet, so it'd be stranger if he could remember it all clearly.

Looking at it now, Lu Boyuan's hairstyle was a bit outdated, but Jian Rong still felt like he was extremely handsome.

Both of the photos were extremely blurry, but Jian Rong still saved them down.

Before leaving the practice room, Lu Boyuan glanced at the short-sleeved shirt that Jian Rong was wearing, and then he glanced at the cracked open window.

Jian Rong had already matched into a game, and he was currently in the pick/ban phase. Lu Boyuan slipped off his jacket and put it across Jian Rong's legs. "Go to sleep after this game."

Jian Rong subconsciously hugged the jacket and responded with a low 'okay.'

For a few minutes after Lu Boyuan left, Jian Rong continued to hug the jacket. He only picked it up and draped it around his shoulders after he entered the game.

Actually, he wasn't cold. On the contrary, he felt a bit flushed, but he still wanted to drape the jacket around himself.

A moment later, Jian Rong stood up, coat hanging from his shoulders, and pushed open the window a little more.

Jian Rong went back to his room after he finished the last game, but he didn't go right to sleep. After showering, he laid down on his bed and couldn't resist taking out his phone so that he could zoom in and look at those pictures again.

He recalled Lu Boyuan's "*I'm not as good as you think I am*."

But even after Jian Rong stared at the ceiling and pondered over it for quite some time, all the way until he fell asleep, he still couldn't think of any

aspect of Lu Boyuan that wasn't good.

The next day, Jian Rong woke up especially early—nine AM. At this hour, TTC's base felt just like an empty building. Apart from the occasional snore that not even two doors could block, no other noises possibly existed.

Jian Rong couldn't fall back asleep, so he decided to get up and play some ranked games.

After washing up, he glanced at the jacket hanging over the chair.

In any case, nobody was really up and about this early at the base… if he wore it while he played in the morning and then took it off at noon, it should be fine.

After all, it was bright and early, so it was still a bit cold where the computers were.

Once he persuaded himself, Jian Rong picked up two packages of bread and a canned coffee as his breakfast. He walked over to the practice room door, jacket draped around himself. Upon seeing the situation inside the practice room, he stood frozen on the spot—

The practice room was full of people. Besides Lu Boyuan, everyone else was present, and they were all playing games too.

For that one split second, Jian Rong thought that his phone's clock had probably broken.

“Xiao Rong.” Yuan Qian was the first to notice him, and he greeted him drowsily. “You’re up?”

The door to the practice room was half-shut. Jian Rong snapped out of his daze and entered the room. “Mn, why are you awake so early?”

“Why else…” Yuan Qian sighed. “It’s the end of the month, I’m trying to meet my streaming quota.”

Excluding Lu Boyuan, all the other team members had fixed streaming quotes every month, and money would be deducted if they couldn’t hit their quotas. Jian Rong had already reached his streaming quota ages ago, so he didn’t have to worry about that at all.

For the entire past month, Yuan Qian had been secretly practicing different champions on his side account, so he didn’t stream that often. Now that it was the end of the month, he was still seven hours short.

Jian Rong put his breakfast down on the computer desk and asked the person next to him, “You also haven’t met your streaming quota?”

“How is that possible! I can stream 800 hours[1] in a month!” Xiao Bai covered his mouth with the back of his hand and gave an enormous yawn. “I’m just keeping P-baby company as he makes up his time. He’s too lazy, it’s already the 30th, yet he’s still missing sixteen hours… he’ll have to keep streaming tomorrow.”

Pine frowned. “I didn’t tell you to get up early and keep me company.”

“I’m already awake, at a time like this you can only say ‘*thank you my little support*,’ otherwise shut your mouth.” As he was recalling to base, Xiao Bai turned and shot a look at Jian Rong. “How come you’re also up so early, it’s not like you need to make up any hours…”

Xiao Bai paused halfway through his sentence and continued to stare at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong didn’t notice his gaze. He sat down, started his computer, and ate his bread while he responded indistinctly, “Practice.”

Since it felt uncomfortable wearing his headphones for too long, Xiao Bai temporarily tugged them off so that they hung around his neck. He asked, “How come you’re wearing my *ge*’s jacket again?”

“…” Jian Rong was still chewing on a mouthful of bread, which caused his cheeks to puff up. He glanced at Xiao Bai’s computer screen. “You’re dead.”

Xiao Bai felt shocked. “I was just asking a question, and you curse at me again??”

Jian Rong was speechless. “I meant, you’re dead in the game.”

Xiao Bai gave a start, and he turned back to see the special effects from getting injured appear on his screen. He howled, “Ahhh Kongkong this son of a bitch snuck up on me!!!”

Only then did Jian Rong realize that Kongkong was the person who caught Xiao Bai in the jungle. Not only that, when Xiao Bai pulled up the

scoreboard—of the game's ten players, seven of them were professional players.

The barrage was asking—

[Purely a passerby, just wanted to ask: is this the live broadcast from a regular spring season match?]

Xiao Bai responded leisurely, "Do you think that only people from our team need to meet their quotas? It's the end of the month, nobody's out here having a good time."

Jian Rong: "…"

After breakfast, Jian Rong logged into the game and was about to enter the solo queue when the practice room door opened.

Ding-*ge* knew that the team members would all be getting up early these next few days, so he walked inside carrying two plastic bags. "Has everyone eaten breakfast yet? I brought some *youtiao* and soy milk, you guys…"

As he was speaking, he suddenly stopped walking. He sniffed exaggeratedly a few times before he slowly turned his head in disbelief and looked at their new mid laner with an extremely resentful expression.

When Lu Boyuan woke up, he had numerous messages on his phone.

They were all from XIU. Who knew if that guy let the alcohol get to his head last night, but after he went back to his base, he sent over countless bold, audacious texts—

[PUD, XIU: I've figured it out, I'm definitely going to block off this 'next wave' in the ocean.]

[PUD, XIU: *Laozi* is gonna show him and practice all night.]

[PUD, XIU: Never mind I fed two games, going to sleep]

[PUD, XIU: Apologies, bro, the champion of this spring season has already been decided by me.]

[PUD, XIU: Also I thought about it in my shower just now, if you and Soft really got together, wouldn't the circle explode?]

[PUD, XIU: Wait a sec, then aren't you gay?!]

Lu Boyuan couldn't help but question just how much this person drank last night before Lu Boyuan arrived at the barbeque stand.

[R: Not a bad way of thinking, but the champion has nothing to do with you.]

After sending that text, Lu Boyuan slipped his phone into his pocket.

When Lu Boyuan walked downstairs, he saw two people standing outside the practice room door. Ding-*ge* was lifting up Jian Rong's arm as he sniffed at his sleeve.

Jian Rong didn't resist. He was facing away from the stairs, and he had stuck his other hand into his pocket; from the back, he didn't seem to be particularly energetic.

“Be honest,” Ding-*ge* let go of his hand, “did you smoke?”

Lu Boyuan paused slightly as he descended the stairs, and he clicked his tongue very softly.

An entire night had passed, not even a dog’s nose was this good…

The practice room door was still a tiny bit ajar. Xiao Bai’s anguished wail after being killed by the enemy was too loud, so Jian Rong didn’t hear the movement behind him.

“Mn,” he said.

Ding-*ge* spotted the person who had just come downstairs from the corner of his eye, but he didn’t have time to greet him. He put a hand on his hip and was somewhat puzzled. “How come you started smoking this crap out of nowhere? Didn’t you not know how to smoke?”

Jian Rong lied blatantly, “I’m feeling a lot of pressure.”

“What pressure do you have?” Ding-*ge* frowned. “You’re not lacking money, you haven’t lost any matches, and those water friends in your stream can’t out-flame you.”

“I,” Jian Rong paused for two seconds, “I was almost stabbed by someone, so I just wanted to smoke a bit to take the edge off the shock.”

Ding-*ge*: “…”

“There’s a fine for smoking, right?” Jian Rong pulled out his phone from his pocket. “What’s your Alipay?”

Sometimes, Ding-*ge* truly had his doubts: did Jian Rong really only start playing competitively because of the money?

How come this guy never even batted an eyelash every time he was penalized? He transferred money over more directly than anyone else, and he acted as if he was even willing to sponsor a money-recharging event that gave out 113,000 yuan for every 100,000.

But rules were rules, and Jian Rong had to be penalized even if this was his first time smoking. In addition, Ding-*ge* truly didn't want Jian Rong to pick up this habit; it was bad for the lungs. It was fine if this could just be considered a lesson too.

"Transfer it to my WeChat," Ding-*ge* said. "Once it's sent over, I'll use it to treat everyone to a midnight snack. This was how all the fines they paid before were settled as well, you don't mind, right?"

Jian Rong shook his head.

He had just opened WeChat when someone tugged away his phone.

"Are you addicted to penalizing him now?" Lu Boyuan locked Jian Rong's phone.

Jian Rong was startled, and he remained frozen in his phone-holding posture.

Ding-*ge* also stared blankly. "Do you think I want to penalize him? I'd rather give him an allowance so that he'll be a bit better behaved."

Lu Boyuan said, “Still, he’s not the one you should be penalizing.”

Ding-*ge* blinked. “What do you mean?”

Lu Boyuan lifted his hand and pinched the collar of Jian Rong’s jacket. His movements caused the back of his fingers to slide across Jian Rong’s neck, leaving a faint tickling sensation in its wake.

There was an “R” underneath the collar of Jian Rong’s jacket.

“The jacket is mine.” Lu Boyuan’s voice was a bit husky from just waking up, and he explained lazily, “I was the one who left the smell of smoke on it.”

Ding-*ge* was dumbfounded, and he carefully examined the jacket that Jian Rong was wearing. It really was Lu Boyuan’s.

“You were smoking again—you smoked with XIU last night, didn’t you? Great, I’ll send a text to PUD’s coach in a bit.” After Ding-*ge* said that, he looked at Jian Rong in bewilderment. “Since you weren’t the one smoking, why’d you insist on taking the fall for it? Couldn’t you have just said so?”

Lu Boyuan noticed something: every time Jian Rong grew nervous or didn’t know what to do, he liked to mess with his hair.

Sensing Lu Boyuan’s gaze, Jian Rong clenched his teeth and went quiet for a long moment before he finally forced out—

“I have a lot of money.”

Ding-*ge*: “?”

Jian Rong said, “I just like to pay fines.”

Ding-*ge* was rendered utterly speechless.

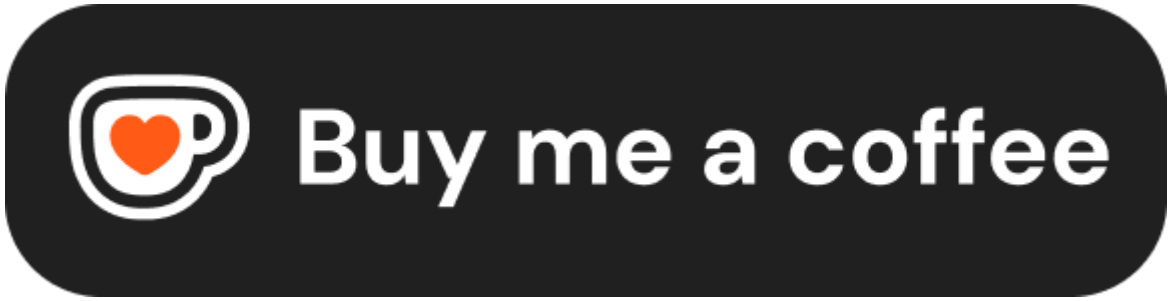
A second later, Lu Boyuan patted Jian Rong’s back. There was a trace of laughter in his voice. “You’re rich, we got it… go in first, I need to talk to Ding-*ge* about something.”

Jian Rong stiffly pushed open the practice room door before he suddenly remembered something and turned around again. “Let me give the jacket back to you…”

“No need.” Lu Boyuan glanced at him and said, “If you like it, just keep wearing it.”

Translation Notes

1. *There are only 730 hours in a month lmao Xiao Bai* ^



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ICDI Chapter 67: I don’t have any girls that I like.

After Ding-*ge* announced that those who reported smokers would be rewarded, not only did nobody report anything, some people even went so far as to cover up and take the blame for someone else—that was really freaking something that Ding-*ge* would’ve absolutely never expected.

The sound of money entering his wallet rang through the air.

Even though Lu Boyuan had never once been penalized by the LPL in his five year career, he had lost quite a bit of money to Ding-*ge*. For the past year, it could be said that he, Yuan Qian, and Pine were the three people who had paid for all of TTC’s midnight snacks.

“Transferred the money to you.” Lu Boyuan put away his phone.

Only then did Ding-*ge* remember: if he could only pick one person who was the most proficient in handing over the penalty fee, then that person would still be Lu Boyuan.

Actually, Ding-*ge* didn’t ban smoking before. After all, nine out of ten professional players all smoked. The pressure in this profession was too great; newcomers continuously poured in and the audience had strict expectations. A player could be insulted to the point that they entered the hot search just for losing a single match, so the taste of nicotine could grant them a moment of reprieve.

But at the beginning of last year, a professional player found out that he had end stage lung cancer, and he retired then and there.

Getting lung cancer at only 23 years old: that piece of news scared countless clubs, and one after another they internally required that their players quit smoking.

Ding-*ge* clenched his teeth and came out with this callous rule. However, he used all the penalty money that he received on the players themselves. He was the one who paid for takeout, eating out at restaurants, and even occasionally new clothes. In fact, it was basically the same as everyone putting their money into a savings account with him.

"Didn't you already quit, more or less?" Ding-*ge* frowned. "How come you took it back up again recently?"

Lu Boyuan slipped his phone into his pocket. "I only smoked one cigarette, most of it is the smell of the barbeque stand."

Ding-*ge* pondered over it briefly. XIU was most likely in a bad mood if he were to call Lu Boyuan over in the middle of the night, and linking that to PUD's recent internal news…

He gave an almost imperceptible sigh. "In any case, smoke a little less. I bought breakfast, go and eat up."

TTC's practice room was especially noisy today—

Yuan Qian took a gulp of water. "What champions have I been practicing lately… of course I can't say. Just wait and see, you'll find out soon enough. Water friends who haven't followed me yet, hit that follow button, I'm only two hundred away from rounding out the follower count."

Pine: “Thank you for the gift.”

“Come come come it’s the end of the month bros, help me charge onto the rankings, all your free gifts will reset next month! Kongkong just stole 16 points from me, I’m bound to surpass him on today’s livestream ranking!” Xiao Bai leaned in towards the barrage. “What? You’re saving it for my *ge*? Don’t worry, my *ge* won’t be streaming again this month, he might not even stream next month. Giving it to Soft? His stream is ranked so high, he doesn’t need it—”

Jian Rong was only wearing headphones over one ear, and he said coldly, “I want it.”

“?” Xiao Bai said incredulously, “How come you’re stealing my business?”

Jian Rong said, “You’re the one stealing my business, they already said that they’re giving it to me.”

Xiao Bai lowered his head, feeling wronged, and fiercely inhaled a mouthful of yogurt.

Actually, Jian Rong was just joking around. He didn’t want to stream today; there were too many people streaming at the end of the month, so the stream traffic wouldn’t be as good as usual. It wasn’t worthwhile to join in the fun.

He had just finished a solo queue game.

Jian Rong stared at the scoreboard for a while. He kept feeling like the last two games had been somewhat boring.

He cast a glance behind him and happened to spot Lu Boyuan tossing his empty soy milk cup into the trash can.

After spacing out in front of the matchmaking screen for half a minute, Jian Rong picked up his phone and sent Lu Boyuan a text.

[R-ong: Captain]

Immediately afterwards, Jian Rong continued to type out three words: *Wanna duo Q*

"Captain, are you done eating? I'm on my side account, should we start queueing now?" Yuan Qian turned his head and asked.

"Mn, I'm logging in now," Lu Boyuan said before he picked up his vibrating phone and glanced at it.

"Ah, yeah, I'm duo queueing with Captain today." Yuan Qian said to the barrage, "Coach said that our coordination is still lacking a bit in terms of tower-pushing and counterganking, so he told us to practice together more… it's fine, we're only practicing our coordination, not any strategies or tactics. It's fine if I stream it."

Jian Rong stared at the text that he had already sent out, and for the first time, he detested his online chatting habit of splitting something that could be sent in one message into two.

[R: En]

Jian Rong: "…"

The hand that he had propped up under his chin slowly traveled upwards, until it was braced against his forehead.

Since he had already gotten Lu Boyuan's attention, he had no choice but to brace himself and respond.

[R-ong: I'm going to the break room… do you want some instant coffee?]

Damn.

Jian Rong felt embarrassed right after he asked that. When he made instant coffee, it was either extremely bitter because he didn't put anything in it, or it was sweet enough to kill someone because he put in too much milk and sugar.

[R: No thanks.]

Before Jian Rong could reply, his phone vibrated again two seconds later—

[R: Once I'm done practicing with Qian-*ge*, we can Q together for a while?]

Jian Rong's eyes lit up. With pursed lips and an expressionless face, he swiftly answered with an "*okay*."

Everyone practiced from noon till nightfall. While they were eating dinner, they started watching the live broadcast of PUD's match.

PUD was playing against Fighting Tiger tonight, and it could be considered as one of the bigger highlights of the regular spring season.

“Who do you guys think will win?” Xiao Bai held a bag of potato chips and kicked back in a position suited for watching a movie.

Pine: “PUD.”

“Not necessarily, Fighting Tiger is fairly stable. PUD is still in its adjustment period.” Yuan Qian was eating a popsicle. “After all, they have three Koreans on their team now.”

“The other two Koreans are really good at Chinese, Savior should be the only one who isn’t quite up to par.” Xiao Bai looked at the people next to him. “What about you two? Who do you think will win?”

Thinking of the text bombardment that he had received upon waking up, Lu Boyuan said indifferently, “PUD.”

Jian Rong chewed on his gum. He didn’t even think about the question, he just also answered, “PUD.”

Xiao Bai: “Why?”

“No particular reason.” Jian Rong said simply, “Randomly picked one.”

Lu Boyuan’s lips curled up, and he checked on how XIU was doing through the camera.

XIU was evidently even more nervous than usual. He sat ramrod straight, as if this were his first competition ever. Someone unfamiliar with the circumstances might’ve even assumed that he was a newcomer that had crawled out of some corner.

In this match, the two teams played the full BO3, and each game took over forty minutes.

Forty minutes could be considered a very long game. Fighting Tiger excelled at playing in the late game, but PUD wasn't one to be outdone either. The two teams brilliantly embodied the term "macro"[1]—farming together in the early game, you kill my top laner I kill your ADC, you clear my wolf camp I clear your raptor camp… there were no more than three large-scale team fights in every game.

In a situation where both teams used the same tactics, the individual strength of PUD's members was clearly a cut above Fighting Tiger's.

In the end, Fighting Tiger was defeated twice in a row, and PUD won the match with a score of 2:1.

After the match ended, Xiao Bai asked faintly, "We're playing PUD next week, right?"

"Yes, that's right." Yuan Qian paused. "How come I feel like… PUD has become even stronger?"

Pine hummed. "Even though both sides had approximately the same amount of gold at thirty minutes, it felt like PUD was suppressing Fighting Tiger the whole time."

"No kidding." Ding-*ge* was standing behind them. "They just spent 16 million yuan buying their new mid laner, how could they possibly be weaker than before? A language barrier is hardly a big deal, anyone can go on stage as long as they can understand pings."

Xiao Bai was astonished. “16 million??”

“I don’t know the specific price. In any case, the starting price quoted to me was 16 million for two seasons, but I didn’t agree. He probably quoted around the same price to PUD, or even more.”

“So damn expensive…” Yuan Qian swore before he couldn’t help but ask their mid laner, “Jian Rong, how much was your signing bonus? You only signed on for one season, right? The contract is set to expire right after the spring season?”

“Mn.” Jian Rong stuffed both hands into his pockets and leaned back in his chair. A few seconds passed before he said coldly, “1.4 million.”

Everyone went silent for a moment, before they simultaneously looked at Ding-*ge*.

Ding-*ge* coughed lightly.

Originally, he did want to propose a somewhat higher price, but unexpectedly, right after he threw out a number, Jian Rong agreed to it without even thinking twice.

“Why are you all looking at me?” Ding-*ge* said, “Even though it isn’t that high, it’s already a very reasonable price. What other newcomer could become a starter right after entering the team and get a salary in the millions to boot?”

What Ding-*ge* said made some sense; if this were a few months ago, that price would still be considered normal. After all, when the other three

people joined the team, their monthly income wasn't even two thousand. Back then, Pine's signing bonus was also 800,000 yuan for one season.

The only thing was, Jian Rong had performed too well after entering the team, so people subconsciously felt like he deserved a better price.

The camera switched over to the post-match interview. XIU was the MVP of this match, and after he answered a few standard questions, he said that he was looking forward to confronting Road's jungle the most.

Lu Boyuan wasn't really interested in watching the rest. He stood up and very gently patted the hair of his team's mid laner, who wore a resentful scowl on his face because his market value was one sixth[2] of someone else's.

"You'll become expensive next season." He said, "Don't watch anymore, let's go duo queue."

—

Ding-*ge* always worked quickly and decisively when it came to business.

Jian Rong had signed the keyboard ambassador contract a long time ago. On Sunday, Jian Rong received the notification informing him that he had to go take marketing photos.

Ding-*ge* instructed, "I have to take care of some other things today, so I contacted two assistants. They'll come over soon and go over there with you."

“It’s fine, I can just go by myself.” Jian Rong was in the middle of a game, and he rejected the offer without looking back.

“Taking brand ambassador photos isn’t the same thing as taking team photos. The photographer will have quite a few requests,” Ding-*ge* persevered. “Also, you’re a starter, so how could I possibly let you go over by yourself? No matter what, there has to be an assistant with you. Just wait a bit, it’ll take them twenty minutes to get over here by taxi. You should head out after this game.”

When Jian Rong thought about having to interact with two strangers for an entire afternoon, his brows furrowed together. “I said that it’s fine…”

“I’ll go with him.”

Everyone else in the practice room was startled. Jian Rong couldn’t even bother to keep eating the minions, and he turned his head in shock.

Lu Boyuan picked up his jacket and stood up. “What time do they want him to get there?”

Ding-*ge* was originally thinking that maybe two assistants weren’t even enough. After all, Jian Rong could also be considered a little esports male god at this point. As a newcomer, he was much stronger than the majority of esports players in all aspects, besides his salary.

But for Lu Boyuan to go with him… their combined popularity level would really be a little too freaking high. When Lu Boyuan went to take his own endorsement photos, Ding-*ge* had arranged for eight people to go along with him.

But Lu Boyuan insisted on accompanying Jian Rong over, and Ding-*ge* couldn't really say anything about it. After all, it was Sunday, so the members could request to go outside after fulfilling their practice quotas for the day.

Upon hearing that Lu Boyuan wanted to go over with him, Jian Rong subconsciously wanted to decline.

But at the same time, when the words reached his mouth, he couldn't quite bear to voice them; he was afraid that Lu Boyuan really wouldn't go.

As Jian Rong was tossing back and forth between declining the offer or remaining silent, Lu Boyuan had already finished getting ready and was discussing the specific location for filming with Ding-*ge*.

Ding-*ge* compromised. "You can go with him if you want, but don't drive over yourself. It'll take half an hour to get there, I'll ask a driver to take you two."

Lu Boyuan gave an indifferent "en." "He's shooting by himself?"

"No way, I already told you, it's a couple version. Qiuqiu is going too."

Lu Boyuan nodded and met Jian Rong's eyes from the corner of his vision. "Done with your game?"

Jian Rong: "...mn."

Lu Boyuan picked up Jian Rong's hat from the table and put it on Jian Rong's head. "Let's go then."

There were people everywhere at the film studio. A dozen or so staff members were putting together the set, and the whole situation was much more large-scale than when Jian Rong was taking his team portrait photos.

Although Ding-*ge* had given him a heads-up in advance, when the makeup artist approached him with eyeliner, Jian Rong's brows still knitted together tightly enough that he could kill a mosquito between them.

The makeup artist: "Dear, don't be nervous, I won't poke your eye, relax~ you're very sensitive."

Jian Rong's eyelashes fluttered wildly, and he pressed his lips together with extreme impatience. After a long time, he finally responded, "…oh."

Lu Boyuan stood behind him, watching him through the mirror. He was still wearing his hat, and there was a hint of a smile on his lips.

"God Lu?" A man walked over: it was the representative who the manufacturer sent over to supervise the filming. He extended a hand in surprise. "How come you're here?"

Lu Boyuan shook his hand. "I brought our mid laner over to take marketing photos."

The man was dumbfounded for two seconds. "You brought him over to take…"

"Mn." Lu Boyuan smiled. "I had some time, so I wanted to try moonlighting as an assistant."

"…"

"*Aiya* don't open your eyes!" The makeup artist shrieked, "It's over, it's crooked now, we have to redraw it."

Jian Rong, who just wanted to peek at who Lu Boyuan was chatting with: "……I'm sorry."

Once Jian Rong was done with his makeup, Lu Boyuan was sitting in the seat next to his, playing on his phone.

The makeup artist heaved a sigh of relief and arranged the makeup kit before looking at Jian Rong in satisfaction. "Done! Aren't you so handsome?"

Lu Boyuan looked up.

Jian Rong was already pale, so they hadn't put too much foundation on him. The eyeliner wasn't exaggerated either; it only traced his original eye shape.

Lu Boyuan couldn't really tell the difference. "Mn, handsome."

Jian Rong resisted the urge to rub his eyes. He narrowed his eyes and looked at himself in the mirror. "I'm… even paler than the wall??"

The makeup artist: "It's fine, it's perfect this way. You won't appear so pale on the camera in a bit."

Jian Rong: "My eyes look like someone punched them."

The makeup artist: “…it’s your misperception.”

Jian Rong: “There’s some dust stuck to my nose.”

“……that’s contour.” The makeup artist forced a smile and complained in a Taiwanese accent, “You’re really such a straight man.”

Lu Boyuan’s smile froze for a moment.

The makeup artist went to take a break. Jian Rong pursed his lips together forcefully, wanting to make the lipstick appear a little lighter.

Lu Boyuan thought that his eyes were still bothering him. “Very uncomfortable?”

Jian Rong turned his head. “A bit. Does this makeup artist not know how to…”

Before he could finish speaking, Lu Boyuan suddenly reached out with his hand and wiped next to his lips, very softly, with the pad of his finger.

Jian Rong went motionless.

Lu Boyuan withdrew his hand, and a blotch of color dyed his finger. “Don’t press your lips together anymore, the lipstick is getting messed up. They’ll have to touch it up if it fades, bear with it.”

Jian Rong kept staring at Lu Boyuan’s hand. Quite a few seconds passed before he finally said, “…got it.”

A few people walked in, escorting a young woman.

Qiuqiu was still young, and with her light and neat makeup, she looked just like a beautiful campus idol in high school. She wore a youthful sweet fragrance, and the entire makeup room was filled with her scent right after she entered.

“God Lu, Soft, hello, it’s nice to meet you both.” Qiuqiu smiled slightly and explained, “I’m missing a pair of shoes on my end, but a staff member already went back for them. It’ll probably be another ten minutes before we can start shooting, so you might have to wait a moment… you two don’t mind, right?”

Jian Rong retracted his gaze and shook his head. “It’s fine.”

“That’s good.” Dimples appeared on Qiuqiu’s cheeks when she smiled. “I really enjoy watching your streams.”

Qiuqiu left soon after, and the door to the makeup room closed again.

“Is she pretty?” Lu Boyuan suddenly asked.

Jian Rong said honestly, “She is.”

Jian Rong always told it like it was.

Qiuqiu was indeed pretty. She brimmed with youth and seemed pure and natural.

Lu Boyuan looked up from his phone. “This is the type that you like?”

Jian Rong was startled, and he answered very quickly, “It’s not, no way.”

Lu Boyuan watched him. “Then what type of girl do you like.”

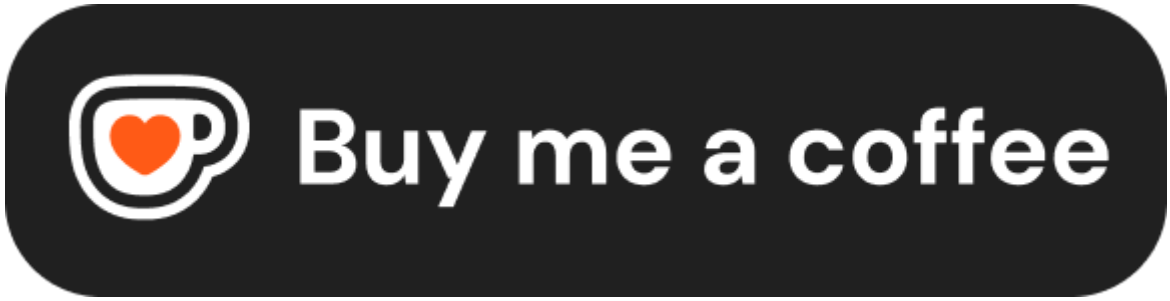
Jian Rong’s eyes shined under the lights in front of the mirror, and Lu Boyuan was reflected within them.

A long moment later, Jian Rong said, “…I don’t know. I don’t have any girls that I like.”

Translation Notes

1. *Short for macromanagement, refers to the overall strategy/long-term planning of a team (knowing when to take objectives and when to move on, etc)* ^
2. *Savior is 16M for 2 seasons, meaning 8M for 1 season. 8M divided by 6 is roughly 1.3M* ^

Yan: Quick announcement! A new novel is up on our site: Panguan by Musuli. You can check out all my ramblings on it at the novel page! It’s basically completely different from ICDI, but I promise it’s so, so good.



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ICDI Chapter 68: It’s very normal to date.

Although they were promoting couple keyboards, they didn’t actually have to be all that intimate in the photos.

After all, one was a female celebrity, while the other was a little rookie male god from the esports circle. No matter what, they couldn’t make the photos seem too ambiguous.

The theme of the photoshoot centered around the two of them gaming together. The closest they got to each other was when they were sitting shoulder to shoulder in front of the computers, and they put their hands in the same bag of chips.

Jian Rong sat in the gaming chair that the staff had prepared for him. Not too far away, Lu Boyuan was surrounded by a few staff members, both guys and girls, who were done setting up and wanted autographs from him. Lu Boyuan’s head was lowered as he talked to them, and the brim of his hat covered up his face so that his expression couldn’t be seen clearly.

Qiuqiu returned from touching up her makeup. She turned her head and asked, “Do you not have any matches today?”

Jian Rong said indifferently, “No.”

The photoshoot hadn’t started yet. The photographer was still instructing a few stagehands to move around props.

“I started watching your streams a very long time ago.” Qiuqiu said, “It’s probably been about two years now? Back when I was filming *Songless*.”

Jian Rong was still spacing out. He replied, quite half-heartedly, “Thanks.”

Qiuqiu looked at him before chuckling. “Did you know who I was before this?”

Jian Rong said, “I didn’t.”

The staff member who was arranging Qiuqiu’s hair paused for a moment and shot Jian Rong a look of astonishment.

Even though Qiuqiu’s filmography wasn’t very extensive, her only movie had won her the biggest domestic best actress award, so her popularity was extremely high.

The staff: “Last year, Qiuqiu went to your team’s match and played a game there.”

“I only joined the LPL this year.” Jian Rong contemplated briefly before adding, “I don’t really watch dramas either.”

The staff: “…”

Even if you hadn’t joined the LPL yet, you should’ve still watched the match’s live broadcast, right?

Even if you don’t really watch dramas, you should’ve still seen the Weibo hot search, right?

Are you a game otaku or a caveman living at the top of a mountain?

Qiuqiu didn't act awkward about it at all. On the contrary, her smile deepened. "I see… how come you keep looking at Road? Do you need to tell him something?"

Jian Rong rapidly averted his gaze. He lowered his eyes and pressed a few buttons on the keyboard in front of him. Because he was caught in the act, his tone of voice grew rigid. "No."

After Lu Boyuan finished signing autographs for the staff members, he just happened to spot Jian Rong chatting with that female celebrity upon lifting his head.

Jian Rong's eyelids drooped as he talked, and he didn't seem to be very energetic. As they chatted, he reached up and pinched his ear.

A girl passed by in front of him. She had her hand cupped around her phone, and she was whispering to someone on a call. Her eyes were fixed on the photoshoot area. "Soft is taking pictures in the studio next to me! I snuck my way in! How's my side doing? They're already almost done with the shoot… I'm just a makeup assistant, it doesn't matter if I'm there or not, in any case it's not like I'll be the one doing their makeup. Savior? He's pretty cute.

"Hey, Soft's partner is actually Qiuqiu.

"Really, it's Qiuqiu… what do you mean, tarnishing your goddess? Soft is also very handsome, okay? Haven't heard of him before… he just joined the LPL, you've been too busy chasing stars these days, of course you haven't

heard of him before. Tsk, if you don't believe me, I'll turn on the video and show you."

The girl turned on WeChat video. "Look for yourself, you don't believe me even though I already told you, he really is handsome. Speaking of which, Soft and Qiuqiu actually look quite good together. They're also around the same age, do you think they'll…"

Halfway through her sentence, someone patted her shoulder.

The girl looked back, puzzled, and made eye contact with the person who was on her computer wallpaper.

The girl was stunned, and she gripped her phone and stopped talking, despite her friend calling *"hello hello hello*" on the other end of the call.

Lu Boyuan was standing next to the door. He lifted his hand and pointed at the sign next to his head—[Authorized personnel only! No photography allowed!].

The girl's heart thumped wildly, and it took her quite some time to put down her phone. "……my apologies!!"

She was quickly discovered by a staff member and was then "asked" to leave.

As the photoshoot was wrapping up, Ding-*ge* sent a text over asking when they would be heading back. He said that he had scheduled a last-minute practice match for that night.

Lu Boyuan lowered his head and replied. A hand suddenly landed on his shoulder.

A familiar voice sounded. “Wasn’t Soft the one taking pictures? How come you’re also here?”

Lu Boyuan didn’t even look up; he just pointed at that sign again.

The newcomer said, “Hey, I already greeted the staff. We were just taking pictures in the studio next door.”

Lu Boyuan only raised his head once he was done replying to Ding-*ge*’s text. He glanced at XIU, whose hair was coated with gel, and he furrowed his brows in disdain. “Was the hair gel in your studio free?”

XIU hadn’t removed his makeup either, as he felt like he looked more handsome this way. Savior was also standing next to him. Savior had round cheeks, but his body wasn’t fat. He was currently wearing a pair of black-framed glasses; he looked more like a top student roaming the streets right after school was dismissed, rather than a professional gamer.

“I look too handsome, so I decided to only wash it off after I go back.” XIU looked at Jian Rong, who wasn’t too far away. “No way, you have to go with him even when he’s just filming an advertisement?”

Lu Boyuan didn’t feel like bothering with him. “Not going back after your shoot, why are you still hanging around here?”

“We were originally planning to go eat dinner, but Savior wanted to come take a look after he heard Jian Rong was here.” XIU shook his head and

clicked his tongue. “You know, Jian Rong really does have the energy of a little esports male god, no wonder you…”

Remembering that there was still someone else next to him, XIU coughed and amended, “No wonder he has a lot of female fans.”

Lu Boyuan swept a glance at PUD’s new mid laner before he looked at XIU. “His livestream room is full of male fans.”

“BS.” XIU said, “You think that just because they call themselves Dad, they’re male? Have you ever seen the water friends’ profiles? Those female fans of his also call themselves Dad.”

Lu Boyuan shifted his gaze away. He had no interest in checking the water friends’ profiles.

On the other side. The photographer lifted his camera. “Smile for me, that’s right Qiuqiu, excellent! Soft, you smile too—”

Jian Rong saw the crowd of people in the back of the studio. Lu Boyuan was standing next to PUD’s members, and XIU had his arm hooked around Lu Boyuan’s shoulders in an intimate pose.

Actually, it was just the very commonly seen arms-around-shoulder pose between normal bros.

“Smile for me, Soft.” The photographer lowered his camera. “Soft?”

Jian Rong snapped out of it and lifted the corners of his mouth.

The photographer: “…smile a bit more sincerely.”

The corners of Jian Rong's mouth hiked up some more.

The photographer: "Eh… your smile is a little fierce, you can decrease the intensity."

With one photoshoot, Jian Rong's mouth felt stiff from smiling so much.

By the time it ended, XIU and the rest were still there, but he didn't have his arm hooked around Lu Boyuan's shoulder anymore.

"Done shooting? You've worked hard, you've worked hard." XIU beamed as he said that, before he saw Jian Rong's expression. "What? You're not happy, even though you filmed an ad with a female celebrity?"

There was one part of XIU that was extremely similar to Yuan Qian: they always acted very familiarly.

Jian Rong: "Mn."

It wasn't clear whether he was happy or unhappy.

"You're done?" Lu Boyuan straightened up. "Tired?"

Jian Rong licked his lips. "Tired of smiling."

"Let's go back then." Lu Boyuan called over the makeup artist and said evenly, "Hello, if it's not too much trouble, could you help remove his makeup."

The makeup artist came to a halt. "Ah, well, I can, but do you want to take it off? You're so handsome, why don't you just wear it back? I didn't make it

too heavy either, you can definitely go out wearing it."

"Take it off." Jian Rong didn't even think twice. "Take it off right now."

Jian Rong went with the makeup artist. XIU took a sip of his bottled water. "Stop looking, he already went into the room."

Lu Boyuan retracted his gaze. "How come you're still here? No practice?"

"We came out after our practice match. Tonight is a free period, so there's no rush." XIU said, "Wanna eat dinner together?"

"Not today." Lu Boyuan declined. "We have a practice match tonight."

"Nice. There goes your WeChat again," XIU said to his team's mid laner, only to realize upon turning his head that the person in question was gone. "...where'd he go??"

In the makeup room. Jian Rong closed his eyes, allowing the makeup artist to mess around with his face.

The sound of footsteps came from behind him. Before Jian Rong could open his eyes and see who it was, he heard the person ask, "Why yuh dun play on Koo-rean suh-vuh?"

Jian Rong furrowed his brows. It took him quite a while before he understood what was being said.

Jian Rong didn't bother opening his eyes. "Why do I have to play on the Korean server?"

In the higher tiers of the Korean server, it was easy for professional players to crash cars.

But Jian Rong kept playing on the domestic server, so Savior couldn't encounter Jian Rong in the game.

"They awl play on Koo-rean suh-vuh." Savior said, "Domestic suh-vuh, no good, many trolls."

Jian Rong gave a lazy "en" in reply. He mimicked his accent: "Aye am one of them."

Savior: "…"

Savior said something in Korean, but then he remembered that he didn't have an interpreter with him, so he had no choice but to express what he wanted to say with difficulty. "Aye want to hit[1] yuh."

The makeup artist: "…"

When Jian Rong opened his eyes, Lu Boyuan and XIU just happened to walk into the makeup room.

Jian Rong looked at XIU. "Do you know Korean? I was talking to him for so long, but he couldn't understand a damn thing."

Savior also looked at XIU while frowning and wearing a bemused expression.

XIU said, "I don't. But you can just tell me directly whatever you want to say to him, I'll get the interpreter to relay it to him after we go back."

“Two years ago didn’t I only solo kill you two times and take 48 points from you do you really have to remember it so deeply? Recently I’ve been too busy cleaning up the domestic server’s atmosphere, I don’t have time to go to your Korean server to bully noobs. There’s no rush either if you really want to get beaten up, next Saturday even if you want to run away you won’t be able to. Long live the China-Korea friendship.” After Jian Rong said all that, he double-checked, “Our match against your team is next Saturday, right? Okay, I’m done, remember to translate it. Translate the first half as accurately as you can, the second part doesn’t really matter.”

XIU: “…”

XIU wanted to say, *Why don’t you just ask your team’s captain to help you translate something like this? Your captain is pretty fluent in Korean.*

But Lu Boyuan clearly didn’t intend to help translate.

Nobody else came with TTC’s mid laner and jungler on this trip over. Jian Rong picked up his bag, and Lu Boyuan tossed out an indifferent “*leaving now, see you on Saturday*,” before the two of them left the photography studio without looking back.

On the car ride back, Jian Rong braced his elbow against the window and watched the dimming sky outside. He was still thinking about what happened before the photoshoot, to the point that his head was nearly in the clouds.

What was the meaning of Lu Boyuan asking him whether he liked Qiuqiu or not…

And he had asked Jian Rong if he thought Qiuqiu was pretty.

Jian Rong remembered that those water friends once said that Qiuqiu was a gaming goddess. A lot of professional players all liked her.

Qiuqiu was indeed pretty. She had a nice voice, and she was accomplished in her field; she was young, and she also seemed to have a good personality.

If Lu Boyuan liked her as well, that was very normal.

Lu Boyuan was twenty-three. Wanting to date at this age… also seemed to be very normal.

Jian Rong's eyelids drooped, and he crushed through the hard candy that the makeup artist had given him earlier, creating crunching noises as he chewed.

Right as they returned to the base, they ran into Xiao Bai walking out of the break room.

"You're back! How come neither of you replied to my WeChat messages ah? Did you help me get Qiuqiu's WeChat?" When Xiao Bai saw the expression on Jian Rong's face, he stopped on the spot.

"Forgot." Jian Rong took off his jacket. "What time is the practice match?"

Xiao Bai: "…there's still half an hour."

Jian Rong walked upstairs without giving him a second look. "Then I'm going to take a shower."

Holding his coffee, Xiao Bai waited until Jian Rong was gone before he couldn't help but ask Lu Boyuan, "*Ge*, what's up with him?"

Lu Boyuan: "?"

"Didn't he go take marketing photos with the esport circle's number one beauty?" Xiao Bai questioned. "His expression makes him look like he got in a fight with someone outside, and on top of that, he lost."

"We ran into PUD." Lu Boyuan spoke concisely and headed into the break room.

After he finished making himself a cup of coffee, he tilted his head. "Something else on your mind?"

Xiao Bai wrapped both hands around his mug. He glanced back and confirmed that Jian Rong wasn't back yet before he whispered, "*Ge*, I discovered someone."

Lu Boyuan quietly waited for him to continue.

"A streamer, also on StarTV." Xiao Bai said, "That streamer… keeps copying Jian Rong. He even started fighting with Jian Rong's water friends this afternoon. I don't dare to tell Jian Rong about this…"

Jian Rong dunked his head under the water for quite a while, but for some reason, he still felt irritated.

Jian Rong wasn't in the habit of blow-drying his hair. After exiting the bathroom, he casually rubbed his hair a few times with a towel and

considered it dry enough.

Even as he finished putting on his clothes and left his room, he kept thinking in his head—

It's very normal to date, Qian-ge is also dating, and it doesn't affect practice at all. That female streamer is pretty good too, she's always sending us midnight snacks to eat.

Besides, Lu Boyuan wasn't going to retire for the time being even if he started dating. They could still keep competing together.

They would still be teammates.

And if one day Lu Boyuan did retire, they could still occasionally duo queue together too.

Since he was thirteen, he had been dreaming of sitting on stage and playing competitively with Lu Boyuan.

Now, not only had he joined the team, he was also the one that Lu Boyuan thought highly of, the one who Lu Boyuan had personally vouched for to get him signed onto the team.

Lu Boyuan even watched his streams. Did Xiao Bai receive this kind of treatment? Did Qian-*ge* and Pine receive this kind of treatment?

No! Only he did!

Jian Rong's thoughts veered wildly, and he didn't notice at all that the part he was conflicted over had truly deviated somewhat.

After he was mostly done explaining things to himself, Jian Rong pushed open the practice room door and instantly spotted Lu Boyuan's lit-up monitor. Lu Boyuan wasn't there, but there was a stream playing on the screen.

Although Jian Rong sat in front of a computer all year round, his vision was still extremely good.

On the stream that Lu Boyuan was playing, he saw an unfamiliar male streamer with dyed blue hair, wearing a sailor outfit, playing LoL.

At that moment, Jian Rong was this close to smashing his phone onto the ground.

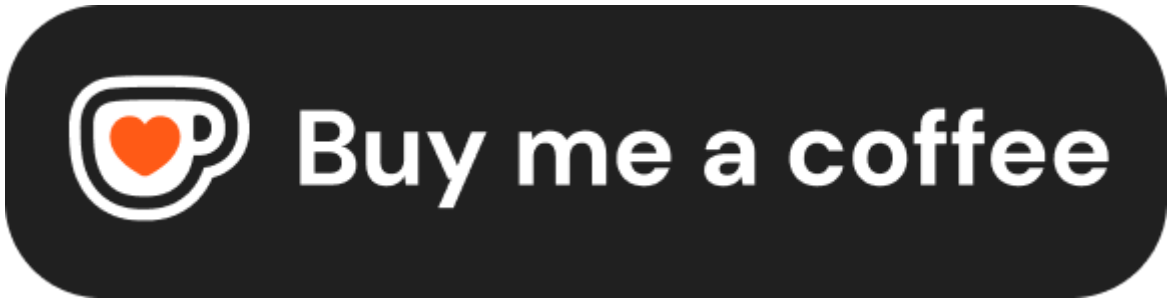
Translation Notes

1. *He means he wants to play against Jian Rong in the game, but the way he uses it here is incorrect, and so it sounds like he's saying he wants to hit Jian Rong* ^

Yan: Thank you for everyone's kind comments on the last chapter ;-; will do my best at work!! Hehe happy new year to everyone~

Wei: Happy New Year everyone!! Hopefully 2021 goes better than 2020 T^T

Here's some more ICDI fanart from Weibo as a new year's gift! (LBYxJR, JR ft. lollipop, bunny!JRxLBY, TTC)



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ICDI Chapter 69: There was something wrong with his thoughts.

Right after Jian Rong turned on his computer, Yuan Qian pushed open the door to the practice room. “Xiao Rong, we’re all in the other room, come on over.”

Yuan Qian spotted something from the corner of his eyes, and the only nearsighted person on the team squinted and said, “Yo, why is Captain watching one of your stream replays?”

The wheels on the chair scraped against the ground, creating a somewhat unfriendly noise.

Jian Rong’s hair was blown into an odd shape by the wind that rushed in through the open window, revealing his clean and neat forehead and the not particularly happy expression in his eyes.

Jian Rong walked past Yuan Qian and said stiffly, “That’s not me.”

Jian Rong didn’t really say all that much in their practice match that night.

Even though Jian Rong didn’t usually talk a lot anyway, Xiao Bai knew that something was up when he finished pushing the bot lane, came to the mid lane to help out, and accidentally ate one of Jian Rong’s minions but wasn’t even scolded for it.

Everyone was still fairly relaxed when they were playing in the practice match.

Yuan Qian recalled to base to buy items before he leisurely made his way to the mid lane. “Oh, that’s right, did the photoshoot go smoothly today?”

Jian Rong was currently in the enemy’s jungle, getting ready to sneak up on them. Any remaining thoughts were devoted to thinking about something else, so he didn’t realize that Yuan Qian was talking to him, and he didn’t respond.

Yuan Qian didn’t notice that anything was amiss. “What’s Qiuqiu like in person? Last time when she was participating in the celebrity tournament, I wanted to take a look, but then Ding-*ge* said we had to review the match and didn’t let us stay at the stadium…”

Xiao Bai asked: “Does my sister-in-law know about this thought of yours?”

“Hey, who doesn’t like looking at beauties? I just wanted to feast my eyes a bit, no other thoughts crossed my mind at all. Doesn’t she look at handsome guys all the time too?” Yuan Qian said, “So, is Qiuqiu the same in person as she is on TV? My wife says that you can even touch up and edit videos these days.”

Lu Boyuan switched POVs in the game and checked on his team’s mid laner, who was still sitting silently in the enemy’s jungle.

“I’ve never seen her on TV before, but she’s not bad in person.” Lu Boyuan indifferently wrapped up that topic of conversation. “Let’s team fight, I’ll engage.”

Right as he said that, a kill announcement popped up in the game. Jian Rong had successfully camped the enemy’s ADC in the jungle, and he had

killed them in less than three seconds.

Like always, they played three rounds in the practice match before finishing up. Ding-*ge* walked into the practice room and glanced at his watch. “You’ve worked hard. Originally, I didn’t want to schedule a practice match for you all since it’s a resting day, but this team asked me at the last minute. We’ve also never played against them before, so I thought that letting you guys go up against them would be beneficial too. I asked someone to buy some midnight snacks, it should be arriving soon, you all should rest after you’re done eating.”

Pine glanced at the English message in the chat that the other team had sent over. “What team is this?”

Ding-*ge* said, “The LCK team that accrued the third most championship points this spring season. They’re also a new team that’s quite strong, they probably didn’t go all out against us tonight.”

“That’s why I don’t like playing practice matches against teams from other leagues.” Yuan Qian leaned back in his chair. “At the most, practice matches between LPL teams can be considered putting on a show. Practice matches with other leagues… it’s basically entirely just messing around. If you showed someone the recording and said it was a Platinum game, they’d believe it.”

Lu Boyuan exited the game. “It’s normal.”

Perhaps teams from the same league would still have mutual improvement in mind. Other leagues… who would want to help train a team from another

country?

As far as he was aware, some LPL teams played just as half-heartedly in practice matches with other leagues.

“At a time like this, I have no choice but to praise Squid. Even though their players are a little moronic, at least they’re sincere.” Xiao Bai glanced at the chat. “Jian Rong, they’re complimenting you in the all chat. If you encounter them in the competitive arena one day, you’re going to be targeted to death…”

“It doesn’t matter, I was also playing casually.” Jian Rong unplugged his keyboard. “If they can get into Worlds, we can talk about it then.”

Back at the practice room, everyone saw the stream that was open on Lu Boyuan’s computer.

Lu Boyuan didn’t really like to wear headphones when he was watching streams or matches, but he didn’t put the videos on speaker either. He turned up the volume on the headphones as high as they could go, that way he could still clearly hear the audio even when he was sitting in his chair.

This male streamer was using a sound card, which made his voice sound heavy to the point of being greasy. But he was saying: “Room mods, if you see any trolls just directly kick and block them, what kind of dumbass shit is this? It’s your dad’s fault for not shooting you[1] onto the wall all those years ago, which let you come out here and disgust *laozi* today.”

As usual, Lu Boyuan and Ding-*ge* walked at the very end, so they weren't back at the practice room yet. But the others who returned first heard those lines.

Jian Rong frowned and sat in front of his own computer, but he didn't rush to put on his headphones.

"This person is still streaming… I even thought that this was Jian Rong's stream replay earlier." Yuan Qian said without thinking, "Which streamer is Captain watching? He's made himself look very similar to Jian Rong."

Pine pulled out his chair. "His mouth is so filthy."

When Xiao Bai saw that Jian Rong didn't have a reaction, he instantly nodded. "Exactly! He's gone way beyond just looking similar, he even has the same hair and bow as Jian Rong did."

After that, he patted Jian Rong's shoulder. "Of course, he doesn't look as good as you in a dress."

Jian Rong: "."

Who the hell wanted to compete about who looked better in a dress??

When Ding-*ge* pushed open the door and entered the room, he just happened to hear that streamer dive into his second round of insults.

—"Was this Master Yi born without a brain? If you have mental problems[2], why're you playing games? Your mom's definitely gonna die tonight."

"What the hell?" Ding-*ge* furrowed his brows. "Who's watching a stream?"

“Me.” Behind him, Lu Boyuan put away his phone and walked over to his computer before he closed the stream.

When he first entered the livestream room, the streamer wasn’t in front of his monitor yet. Then Ding-*ge* went looking for him at the last minute, so he just idled in the stream and left.

“This streamer hasn’t been blocked even though he swears so obscenely?” Ding-*ge* thought of something and quickly asked, “You weren’t on your main account, right?”

Lu Boyuan said, “No.”

“That’s good.” Ding-*ge* let out a sigh of relief. “Get a good rest tonight. In the next few days, don’t ask me about taking vacation and going outside, I won’t approve any requests. Everyone has to stay here and practice properly. We’re playing PUD on Saturday, let’s muster up our strength and do our best to win.

“Although it’s just a regular season match, you all know this too, the audience likes to watch matches between you guys and PUD. It’s only Monday, but the forums on Tieba have already started fighting about us and PUD… in short, you guys should perform well and strive to enter the playoffs with all victories.”

After Ding-*ge* left, he sent over the practice match schedule for the next two days in their WeChat group.

“Damn, besides eating and sleeping, everything else is practice matches.” Xiao Bai drew in a deep breath.

“For this period of time, don’t bother yearning for your sister-in-law’s midnight snacks. I told her not to send any over, we don’t have time to eat them.” Yuan Qian stood up from his chair. “I’m going upstairs. I’m about to disappear from her world for a week, let me go give her a call now and coax her a bit.”

Not long after Yuan Qian left, Lu Boyuan read over the patch notes for the upcoming Korean server update before he turned off his computer.

Ding-*ge* said all that just to remind Lu Boyuan that their upcoming practice sessions would be very intense, and that he should keep the situation in mind and rest well.

He wasn’t strongly attached to these few hours of playing ranked at night either.

Right after Jian Rong entered the queue, he heard someone ask from behind him, “You filmed the entire day, not tired?”

“Not tired.” Jian Rong paused and searched for an excuse, like he was covering up for something. “I just finished trash-talking PUD, so I don’t want to lose next weekend… I’ll practice for a bit longer.”

Lu Boyuan glanced at the time. “Go to sleep before two.”

The tone of his voice brooked no argument.

Jian Rong pressed his lips together and replied with an okay.

After Lu Boyuan departed, Xiao Bai mused to himself in bewilderment, “I’m also working hard, so how come my *ge* didn’t urge me to go to sleep?”

P-baby said, “You can miss your ult even on Senna, why should you go to sleep?”

“Fuck, I just missed my ult one time today, aren’t you way too good at holding a grudge??”

Jian Rong wasn’t in the mood to listen to them chat.

The moment Lu Boyuan left, he opened the streaming platform.

That blue-haired streamer had already stopped streaming.

After coming up empty-handed, Jian Rong felt even more choked up by the baseless gloominess in his heart.

He waited in the queue for six minutes but still couldn’t match into a game. Jian Rong propped his chin up on his hand and decided to simply start streaming.

[Streaming again at this kind of otherworldly hour?]

[Just tore into PUD’s stupid fans on the forums, if you lose to PUD this Saturday, don’t bother coming back to see Dad.]

[Dumbass I heard that you and Qiuqiu are dating????]

[They really are dating, I saw a photo today, they were even drinking from the same water cup.]

“What kind of nonsense.” Jian Rong frowned. “What photo? Send it to me.

“This one… I was just holding the cup for her for a while, I didn’t drink from it. Are you all schoolchildren? You’ll even believe this kind of photo?”

[Scared me to death. Like I was saying, you’re clearly gay, how could you possibly date a girl!]

[Dumbass are you in a bad mood today? How come you have this bitter melon expression on your face.]

[Doesn’t he always look like this.]

[Dumbass you’ve been copied by a streamer called TT!!!]

[I also saw that, he was on the recommended list all day long. He dyed his hair blue and was wearing a sailor outfit. His skill level seems to be alright, looks like he’s in the top 100 on the domestic server? He also copied the swearing part… but that dumbass didn’t get the essence of it. I watched for two minutes, that dumbass kept insulting people’s parents and all sorts of organs, really idiotic.]

[Relax relax, it’s not like this is his first time being copied, why make a fuss about nothing?]

[The copycats’ personas are all created very deliberately. His type of completely natural dumbass energy is hardly that easy to imitate.]

Indeed, this wasn’t Jian Rong’s first time being copied.

Before, some people had even directly copied his game ID and stream name. Jian Rong hadn't really spoken up about it, and he had even told the water friends not to go over and insult the copycats.

It was extremely difficult for small streamers to make a name for themselves. As long as it didn't affect him personally, Jian Rong didn't care what others did.

In hindsight, Jian Rong realized that he didn't feel irritated because someone was imitating him.

He was annoyed because Lu Boyuan had opened that person's stream.

Lu Boyuan almost never watched other people's streams. He would occasionally enter a teammate's livestream room just to toss out a present and leave again; he almost never stayed for over five minutes. In this respect, Jian Rong was special.

He liked being special.

And he didn't want to share any of it with someone else.

These kinds of thoughts… should be very normal, right? Jian Rong thought, when he was young and saw his teacher pin the little red flower given to him onto other children as well, he would also feel unhappy.

Jian Rong snapped out of it and swept a look at the barrage. "It doesn't matter, it's not like I'm the only person allowed to have blue hair… shut up, same thing with the sailor outfit. I'm gonna start playing now, room mods can just kick anyone who mentions other streamers."

Jian Rong played a few consecutive games and interacted very casually with the barrage.

[It's so early in the night, but TTC's practice room is already empty? Aren't you all slacking off a bit too much? How are you gonna beat PUD on Saturday?]

[Who can endure practicing until two or three AM every night? Health matters most.]

[Speaking of which, is the news that PUD is only scheduling practice matches with Korean teams true or fake??]

[Wasn't PUD a Korean team in the first place? They have three Koreans on their team.]

[Pure passerby here, politely inquiring as to when PUD will be transferring their membership to the LCK?]

"It's their choice what teams they want to have practice matches with. It's not like they're spending your money, why do you care so much?" Jian Rong said absent-mindedly, "Do I think highly of PUD… my views aren't important. I'm only in charge of winning, it doesn't matter how my opponents practice."

As he was speaking, Jian Rong entered a new game.

Before they left the fountain, his teammate suddenly sent a message—

[YY-Doufu: ?]

Jian Rong cursed inside. He hadn't paid any attention to his teammates' IDs when he was choosing his champion, or else he would've long since left the game.

He shifted his finger and directly muted Doufu.

[Muting is the same as admitting defeat—by Soft]

[Why mute him? Insult him!]

[Since it's fate to meet each other, this person here is recommending you both AFK.]

"No insults." Jian Rong said concisely, "I don't have money for the penalties, this game is considered my loss."

Doufu didn't disappoint; sure enough, he started acting. In less than ten minutes, he fed three times in the bot lane.

Jian Rong wasn't in a good mood in the first place today. After he was killed in three hits by the enemy ADC that Doufu had fattened up, he finally couldn't take it anymore and stopped next to his fountain.

He unmuted Doufu and started typing.

[Hahahaha didn't you say you weren't gonna insult him?]

[Thought about it, and decided that 10k yuan wasn't that big of a deal after all.]

Jian Rong had just typed out "*dumbass*" when the practice room door opened.

Lu Boyuan had draped a random jacket over himself, and he was wearing a disheveled short-sleeved shirt inside and loose pajama pants on the bottom. The string on the front of his pants weren't even tied.

He stuffed both hands in his pockets and walked over to stand behind Jian Rong.

"Insulting someone?" Lu Boyuan had slept for a while, causing some exhaustion to seep into his voice.

Jian Rong: "…"

He blinked blankly for a moment before he deleted the word he had typed out and said, "No, it was a typo."

Jian Rong glanced at the time: it was 2:30 AM.

Jian Rong hadn't expected Lu Boyuan to actually come over and catch him. He started to take off his headphones, explaining, "I forgot to check the time…"

Lu Boyuan grabbed his hands and stopped him from moving. "Finish this game first."

Lu Boyuan had just left his bed, so his palms were warm.

The barrage helper exploded—

[Road this bastard is tricking you! He didn't make a typo, he just wanted to perish together with Doufu!!]

[What's going on? How come Road is here??]

[Do you two really enjoy having midnight trysts so much?]

[How come Road looks like he just woke up.]

[Just gonna stand behind the dumbass and not move? What's happening…]

[What is Road doing, someone please explain.]

"I'm not doing anything, just making the rounds." Lu Boyuan said to the barrage evenly, "Watch him stream, no need to pay attention to me."

After that, Lu Boyuan really didn't say anything else.

He only stood behind Jian Rong, completely silent, his posture unchanging. They weren't touching, but Jian Rong could clearly sense Lu Boyuan; he even had the misperception that he could feel the other person's breaths land on his body.

The wind blew in from the cracked open window, and the scent of Lu Boyuan's shower gel filled the room.

Jian Rong tried his best to immerse himself into the game.

A long while later, he heard Lu Boyuan murmur, "His ears?"

Jian Rong spared a tiny bit of energy to check the barrage.

[Yeah yeah yeah, there's probably something wrong with his ears.]

[Not even braised pig ears are this red.]

[Are you all being serious hahahaha]

Jian Rong cursed a "*bullshit*" in his mind. He was about to close the barrage helper when someone gently stroked his ear with a crooked index finger.

Jian Rong instantly froze, and even his character in the game stopped moving.

"It is really red." Lu Boyuan asked, "Are your headphones uncomfortable?"

Jian Rong sucked in a deep breath and shook his head while pressing his lips together. In the end, he wasn't able to hold out.

He felt like he was being submerged in soda; his heart nearly exploded, and there was a buzzing in his ears.

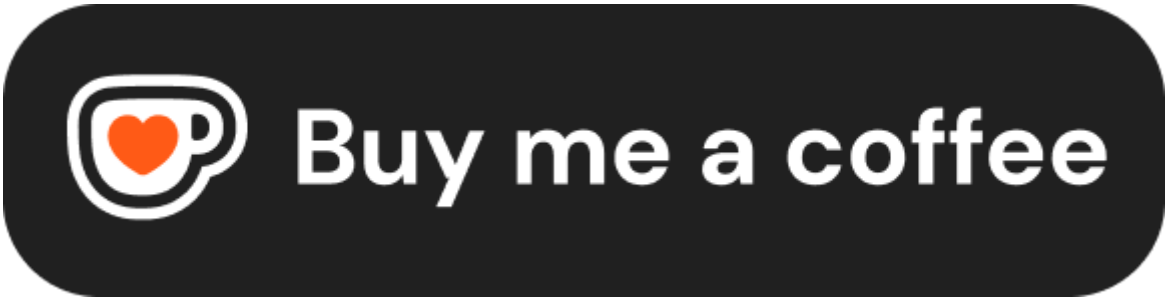
At that moment, Jian Rong knew: there wasn't anything wrong with his ears.

There was something wrong with his thoughts.

Translation Notes

1. *He's being gross here and insinuating that the parents shouldn't have created the person he's insulting* ^
2. *He uses the R word here instead of mental problems, but I'm not going to translate it like that for obvious reasons* ^

Wei: Don’t worry Rong Rong I’m sure you are the most special to Lu Boyuan!!!



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ICDI Chapter 70: You can try having that meaning.

Thanks to Marylambb for the Ko-fi!

Jian Rong guiltily touched his ears. They burned.

He had used the excuse of it being "hot" too many times already. Jian Rong braced himself and said, "They're red because of my anger towards this noob ADC, I've never met someone so trash before… I couldn't control myself."

Lu Boyuan had spotted the ADC's game ID earlier. He asked mildly, "Haven't you met him in a match before?"

"…" Jian Rong paused. "He's on my team this time, so it's a little hard for me to accept it."

[Damn hahahahaha]

[I thought that Road was gonna tell the dumbass not to curse him out, I didn't expect for Road to open his mouth and unleash more fucking mockery too.]

[Recently Xiao Bai and Qian-*ge* also really like to make snide remarks about their teammates while streaming.]

[Never mind Xiao Bai and the rest, have you all ever seen Pine insult someone? Usually, even if he streams for an entire night, he doesn't say much, but now he's learned how to type and shade his teammates too.]

[My god, one piece of rat shit spoiled the entire pot of soup!]

[Erm… just now I went to take a look at Doufu's stream, he kept wanting to talk to the little dumbass, but unfortunately he didn't know that he had long since been muted.]

[What's the point in talking if he already started acting? What, he wants to piss off the little dumbass while also wrecking the little dumbass' wallet?]

[Actually, Doufu was playing pretty seriously, he barely interacted at all with his audience this game.]

[Are Doufu's fans here to clear his name? Squid has lost eight matches in a row already, if you have the time for that you should be clearing their name on Weibo.]

Jian Rong didn't really make any mistakes this time; Ding-*ge* often said that this could be considered one of his strengths. He was very rarely affected by other factors when he played games. Usually, no matter how tired he was from practice, his gameplay was still as smooth and excellent as ever.

Even though the enemy's bot lane was extremely fed this round, Jian Rong still solo killed the opposing mid laner twice relying on skill alone. His equipment swiftly skyrocketed, and he won a team fight while carrying his other four teammates, giving them a chance to catch their breath.

At that moment, his teammate spoke again—

[YY-Doufu: If I said I wasn't purposefully feeding, would you believe me?]

Then that was even more scary. If that was an active pro player's actual gameplay in the LPL, any team from another competitive league who saw that probably wouldn't be able to resist clapping and cheering.

Jian Rong didn't respond. When he had time, he put Doufu back on the mute list.

The game lasted for forty minutes before finally ending. Jian Rong got MVP with a score of 13.8, and he brought victory to his team.

Doufu's friend request popped up. Jian Rong didn't know what this dumbass was trying to pull so late at night, and he didn't even bother rejecting the request before he went offline. Then, ignoring his audience's pleas for him to stay, Jian Rong stopped the stream and turned off his computer all in one go.

"I'm done…" Jian Rong ruffled his hair before he picked up his phone and stood up—then he realized that Lu Boyuan was still standing right behind him.

A person couldn't even fit in the space between them.

Only then did he notice that there was an impression left at the corner of Lu Boyuan's eye from sleep, and his hair at the back of his head was also a bit messy.

Lu Boyuan looked down and reminded him, "You're still wearing your headphones."

Jian Rong closed his eyes and called himself a dumbass inside before he yanked his headphones off and put them on the table. He assumed a tone of voice that he thought sounded extremely natural and asked, “How come you’re awake?”

“I wasn’t sleeping too deeply in the first place.” Lu Boyuan stared at Jian Rong’s eyelashes for a few seconds before he questioned, “Why were you angry tonight?”

Jian Rong was startled, and he responded very quickly. “I wasn’t angry.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t believe him for a single second. He had watched Jian Rong’s stream until he fell asleep, and from beginning to end, Jian Rong’s lips hadn’t curved upwards once.

Lu Boyuan continued his probing. “Because you were copied by someone?”

Jian Rong wanted to say “*no*,” but when he opened his mouth, what came out was, “A little.”

Jian Rong paused before he randomly made up some nonsense. “That person is pretty similar to me in a lot of ways, and I haven’t really had much time to stream lately. If he keeps streaming for a while, those unfilial water friends in my livestream room will probably all end up going to watch him instead…”

“Not similar.” Lu Boyuan lazily interrupted him. “He’s far inferior to you, your fans won’t run away.”

“That’s not guaranteed.” Jian Rong wasn’t very good at hiding what he wanted to say. A few sentences later, he couldn’t help but mutter, “Didn’t you also go watch his stream?”

When he didn’t receive a reply for a long time, Jian Rong thought over what he said a few seconds earlier, and he swore in his mind. “…I was just speaking without thinking.”

Lu Boyuan laughed.

“My fault.” His voice was still a bit raspy, and he said lowly, “Originally, I was planning on going to XIU’s livestream room to send him some gifts, since his birthday is in a few days… then on the home page, I spotted the person who Xiao Bai said was imitating you, so I clicked on him while I was there.”

Lu Boyuan paused and said, “If you’re unhappy about it, I’ll go into other people’s livestream rooms less often in the future.”

Realizing that Lu Boyuan was giving him an explanation, Jian Rong was slightly stunned, and his Adam’s apple bobbed twice as he swallowed.

Did the captains from other teams take care of their members’ moods like this too??

Jian Rong restrained himself from blurting out “*I am unhappy, don’t go to their streams from now on*,” and he said, very dishonestly, “That’s not what I meant…”

Lu Boyuan hummed and told him, “You can try having that meaning.”

Before Jian Rong could collect his thoughts, Lu Boyuan took a step back and made space for Jian Rong. “Okay, go rest, we have to get up before noon tomorrow.”

Jian Rong returned to his room and covered his head with his blanket. Even by the time he was lacking oxygen, he still wasn’t able to fall asleep.

He gave up and kicked aside his blanket. Lu Boyuan’s “*you can try having that meaning*” dizzily filled his entire head.

Jian Rong sucked in a deep breath. Remembering their packed training schedule for tomorrow, he decided to play on his phone for a bit till he grew sleepy.

Apps nowadays were all scarily intelligent. Right when Jian Rong opened a short video app[1], it immediately recommended him a bunch of videos from categories that he usually liked watching.

The first video was a clip of Lu Boyuan being interviewed. The host was Tang Qin, with the hashtag #esports circle golden couple# written at the bottom.

Jian Rong’s face unconsciously darkened, and he was about to skip past it before he thought about it again and went back. He opened the comment section and secretly liked the top comment: “*they don’t look good together at all hah thank you*.”

The second video was of Lu Boyuan leaving the stage during the semifinals from last year’s World Championship. His eyes were cast slightly downward, and there weren’t really any emotions on his face. He silently followed his teammates backstage—and then never emerged again.

When Jian Rong was watching the live broadcast at the time, he clearly hadn't thought anything of it; he only felt regretful and crestfallen.

Now, looking at it again…

Back then, why hadn't he taken advantage of the break room being empty and beaten Kan into a pulp??

Jian Rong fumed with rage and swiped up to see a video of him being carried into the arena by Lu Boyuan.

He swiped up again. This video, featuring Lu Boyuan, was a compilation of cuts from one of their regular season matches—it specially focused on clips of Lu Boyuan ganking the mid lane or shots of him helping Jian Rong get the blue buff.

In a span of ten videos, eight were related to TTC, and six contained Lu Boyuan.

When he came across a video of Lu Boyuan tugging down his mask and smiling during a conversation with Yuan Qian, Jian Rong replayed it a few times before he finally made himself turn off his phone. He buried his face in the pillow and forced himself to fall asleep.

—

The next day at noon, the fragrance of food wafted through the base. The members all sat in the living room, waiting for the meal to be served.

Yuan Qian's head tilted back, and he yawned for the eighth time that day. "This won't do, I can't keep sitting here or else I'm gonna fall asleep."

Pine asked, "Didn't you go upstairs really early last night."

"Yeah. Then I was on the phone with my wife until 3 AM…"

As he was speaking, their mid laner came down the stairs.

Jian Rong was wearing a white sweatshirt and gray pants. His steps were brisk and lively, and his expression was relaxed; he looked extremely energetic.

Right as he walked over to the sofa, Lu Boyuan, whose head was lowered the entire time as he played mobile mahjong, suddenly shifted to the side and made room for him to sit.

Jian Rong abandoned the smaller couch that he usually preferred sitting on. He rubbed his face and sat down next to Lu Boyuan.

Yuan Qian stood up and twisted side to side. "It really does get worse with age. I'll have to get some fire cupping done."

"That depends on the person." Xiao Bai looked at their team's mid laner and jungler with exuberant intrigue. "Look, my *ge* ran over to check on the practice room at 2:30 AM last night, but isn't he still quite energetic?"

Jian Rong: "…"

Lu Boyuan's expression didn't change. On his app, he beautifully drew the tile he needed to win.

Yuan Qian asked blankly, “Check on the practice room? Checking on who?”

“Our mid laner ah.” Xiao Bai pressed his shoulder against Pine’s and flopped onto him. “When I woke up this morning, my Weibo feed was filled with the two of them. At two AM, TTC’s captain personally went to check on the team’s newcomer and urge him to go to bed. The fans even mentioned me and asked if I ever received this treatment.

“Forget checking up on me.” Xiao Bai sniffed dramatically. “I thought about it carefully, but my *ge* hasn’t even told me to sleep earlier before.”

Lu Boyuan stated the facts. “Since when have you ever slept earlier than me?”

Xiao Bai said, “This has nothing to do with me actually going to sleep or not! What’s important is the intention!”

Lu Boyuan nodded. “Then you should sleep earlier tonight.”

“…okay *ge*.” Xiao Bai propped up his head and suddenly remembered something. “Oh, that’s right *ge*, have you ever checked out you and Jian Rong’s Weibo supertopic?”

Jian Rong had just twisted open a bottle of water and taken a sip. He nearly choked when he heard that.

“No.” Lu Boyuan asked, “Me and Jian Rong’s?”

Xiao Bai said, “Yeah, it’s existed for ages. Its follower count grows super fast, which is why Jian Rong’s Weibo has recently gained a ton of new fans too…”

“I don’t need new fans.” Jian Rong stiffly interrupted him.

Xiao Bai said, “If you don’t want them, give them to me. I’m only 30,000 fans short of hitting two million.”

Jian Rong said coldly, “You take them.”

When the auntie came out with the food, what she overheard was precisely that childish conversation.

She chuckled. “You all can come eat now.”

The melodious sound of the doorbell rang just as Jian Rong stood up. It wasn’t the electronic doorbell; it was the doorbell of the house.

The base had two ‘doors.’ One was the large iron gate outside, and one was the house door. Reasonably speaking, people who could enter through the iron gate should also know the password to the front door.

“I’ll get it.” Jian Rong said.

“Wait a second…” Yuan Qian wanted to stop him, but Jian Rong moved too quickly. He could only warn, “Look through the peephole before opening the door.”

Jian Rong glanced through the peephole.

A slightly chubby man was standing outside. He looked to be in his thirties or forties, and his appearance… was a little hard to describe.

Bald, big gold chain, prayer beads, black sunglasses, jade rings, leather jacket, topped off with a cigarette dangling from his mouth.

The big gold chain was shockingly thick, and a Buddhist amulet hung from the front of it. It looked similar to the gold chains that those cannon fodder crime bosses had worn in the gangster movies that Jian Rong had watched many years ago.

From first glance, he didn't seem like some decent person.

Jian Rong's eyes turned frosty. He saw that the man was holding a palm-sized clutch bag in his hand, and Jian Rong tightened his grip on his water bottle before he opened the door.

"Who're you?" Jian Rong asked hostilely, blocking the gap in the door.

The man was originally going to say something, but he ended up blinking blankly at Jian Rong's question. A few seconds later, he blew out a mouthful of smoke and nodded. "Quite spirited. Where's Road and the rest?"

"Need something?" Jian Rong frowned. "How'd you get past the gate?"

The middle-aged man: "..."

He rubbed his little bald head before he put his hands on his hips and said, amused, "How do you think I got past it?"

"Crawled over it?" Jian Rong paused and glanced at the man's belly. "...that doesn't seem likely either."

The middle-aged man: "?"

“What exactly do you want? If you don’t say it, I’m gonna call security.”

“Why else would I come? I’m here to visit you guys, open the door and let me go inside to talk about it…”

“A fan, right.” Jian Rong nodded. “Thank you for your support, but this kind of behavior where you follow us to our base is already crossing the line, hurry up and leave.”

“I’m not a fan. I’m your financier daddy.”

Understanding dawned over Jian Rong, and he nodded. “From the stream? Even so, you still can’t follow me to my base, leave.”

“……” The man pinched his cigarette between his fingers and lowered his head to open his clutch bag.

A water bottle was swiftly aimed at the man.

Jian Rong said vigilantly, “What are you doing? What do you want to take out? You…”

Before he could finish, someone pressed his hand back down.

Lu Boyuan curled an arm around his shoulders and tugged him backwards. When he saw the person standing outside the door, he first lifted an eyebrow before he asked, “How come you’re here, sir?”

There was an obvious note of respect in his cool voice, which made Jian Rong feel somewhat stunned when he heard it.

“I just got back to Shanghai a few days ago, so I wanted to come visit you guys, but I forgot the password for this door.” The man rubbed a hand over his little bald head again and huffed out a laugh, partly out of anger, “Except then I ended up being blocked outside. Nothing I said worked, he insisted on freaking chasing me away…”

“He’s new, he’s never met you before.” Lu Boyuan lifted a hand and patted Jian Rong’s head. “This is our club’s owner.”

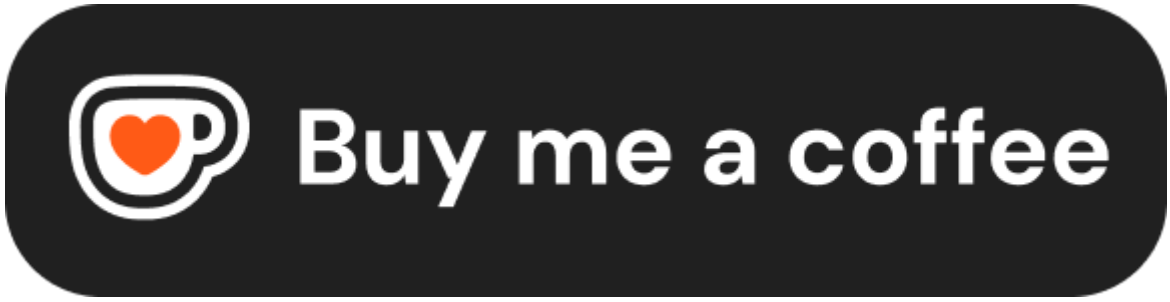
Jian Rong: “…”

Lu Boyuan said, “Greet the club owner.”

Jian Rong silently stuffed the water bottle into his pant pocket. “Hello sir, your[2] necklace looks very nice.”

Translation Notes

1. *Pretty sure this is Tiktok/Douyin haha* ^
2. *He uses the formal you here! (Was using the normal you the whole time before this lolll)* ^



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ICDI Chapter 71: The boss crooked his finger and came to aid the poor esports circle.

Thanks to Somebody for the Ko-fi!

In the esports circle, there were a few teams that could be considered "powerhouses." The label of "powerhouse" didn't refer only to the players' strengths; it also referred to the capital investors backing the clubs.

Most teams were backed by large corporations from a variety of industries—real estate, aviation, sports products, and even food.

For example, PUD was supported by a famous domestic e-commerce company, so they had ample financial resources and could sign on Korean import players as they pleased.

Some other teams were backed by rich and powerful people, and there were some retired players who also created teams and acted as their owners. Of course, most of the time it was still just the young rich elite coming in to play around. However, esports had developed rapidly in the past few years, and gradually they had shifted from playing around to actually investing.

TTC belonged to the latter category.

But even among that category, TTC could be considered unique.

Other teams' wealthy owners were each more famous than the last. If they weren't the original entrepreneurs that became extraordinarily rich, then

they were their children, and everyone knew their names.

But the outside world didn't know anything about TTC's owner. Even his rumored name was vague and uncertain. They only knew one thing for sure —he was a nouveau riche.

After all, TTC was the only team that had a home stadium built next to the river, and the LPL had also been persuaded to make an exception and allow the stadium to serve as competition grounds. In addition, rumor had it that TTC's two mansion-like bases were merely real estate property that the owner had allocated to them with a wave of his hand.

Before joining the team, Jian Rong had once investigated this, but his search was fruitless. After entering the team, he had never met the owner, so he ended up tossing this person to the back of his mind.

He remembered that at the very end of an article, its anonymous poster had guessed that TTC's owner must be some big, low-key, powerful capitalist who negotiated deals worth billions every day. The owner must have had a keen intuition for business opportunities and foresaw that the esports industry would definitely become exceptional one day, which was why he chose to invest early on.

Jian Rong stared at the owner's back and couldn't help but think—

Perhaps after the big boss washed his hands of his previous life, he contacted some fortune-telling master. Then, that master recommended him to do more good deeds, which led him to invest in the esports industry during its most arduous years.

As a result, the crime boss crooked his finger and came to aid the poor esports circle.

In the movies, people who looked like this had tempers greater than the sky.

So after the owner went inside, Jian Rong stood in the entryway and asked woodenly, “Am I going to be kicked out?”

“No.” Lu Boyuan was amused. He closed the door and said, “The owner is a very good person.”

Jian Rong only believed him for ten seconds.

“I heard that someone mailed dead rats to the base?” The owner randomly found an empty seat at the dining table and sat down. He hiked one leg over the other and slapped the table. “Which grandson was it? What’s his name? Where’s he now? Daring to send that kind of unlucky crap to *laozi*’s club, *laozi*’s gonna crush that grandson.”

Jian Rong: “.”

The other members were long since used to the owner’s style. Only Jian Rong and Pine, who had joined the team less than two years ago, looked slightly unnerved.

Xiao Bai explained, “That person was a gambling addict. He placed bets on us but lost until he went bankrupt. In a moment of despair, he came to get revenge…”

“Son of a bitch, got what he deserved.” The owner sneered coldly. “He also stabbed someone?”

“He missed!” Xiao Bai grinned. “He was sent flying by my *ge*’s kick.”

“You only kicked him once?” The owner furrowed his brows and looked at Lu Boyuan, unsatisfied. “Your temper’s getting better and better as the years go by, huh?”

Lu Boyuan took the hot peppers that the auntie handed him and put them in front of Jian Rong. “With that one kick, I was almost banned from competing.”

The owner clicked his tongue, very displeased. “They really keep creating more and more of these bullshit rules.”

“Exactly.” Xiao Bai asked like he was a lackey, “Boss, have you eaten lunch yet?”

Jian Rong’s train of thought stuttered… boss?

Damn. He really was a retired crime boss??

Was TTC’s background… really so freaking complicated?

No wonder nobody in the outside world knew who TTC’s owner was. Of course he would hide this kind of background if he could.

This boss also said that he just got back to Shanghai… it couldn’t be that he got involved in something big previously and had to escape overseas, right.

Jian Rong glanced at the owner, who had already finished off one cigarette. There was another unlit cigarette stuck behind his ear, and he was currently toying absent-mindedly with the prayer beads wrapped around his right wrist. He had pushed the black sunglasses on top of his bald head.

The aura he exuded made it seem like he was carrying the weight of three lives on his back.

“I ate already, my daughter just made me a bowl of noodles. It tasted so damn bad.” The owner’s gaze floated over to Jian Rong. “What’s he called again… Soso?”

Jian Rong said, very naturally, “Soft. You can just call me Jian Rong, sir.”

“I completely forgot. This should be Jian Rong’s first time meeting Boss, right?” Yuan Qian looked at Jian Rong and introduced considerately, “Our boss’ is surnamed Fu[1], you can call him Fu-*ge*, or you can call him Boss like the rest of us.”

Jian Rong nodded. “Boss.”

Fu-*ge* flapped his hand. “If everyone calls me that, you make it sound like we’re a gang or something.”

Though he said that, he was beaming; he was clearly very pleased to be referred to as ‘boss.’ He rotated his prayer beads and looked at Lu Boyuan. “You know, this new brat is pretty similar to how you used to be.”

Jian Rong: “?”

This was Jian Rong's first time hearing something like that.

"No way." Xiao Bai scrutinized the two of them. "Eyes, nose, lips, none of them look that similar."

"You young folk only know to look at appearances." Fu-*ge* leaned back in his chair. "Earlier, that scowl on his face and the look in his eyes, they were a mirror image of yours when you were younger. But he's not as fierce as you were…"

"Is that so." Lu Boyuan asked breezily, "Do you want to game for a while after lunch?"

Fu-*ge*'s attention was effortlessly diverted. "I do want to, but Lao Ding won't agree. He said that you guys have to practice today, tsk, what kind of owner am I… oh, that's right, how's your hand doing?"

Sensing Jian Rong's eyes drift toward him, Lu Boyuan sighed. "Very well. Even if the objective of the competition was changed to tug-of-war, I could still keep tugging for a few seasons."

Fu-*ge* plucked off the cigarette behind his ear and put it in his mouth. While he was at it, he picked up his pack and tossed it to Lu Boyuan. "Try one, this cigarette flavor isn't bad. If you like it, I'll send some over to the base…"

"He quit smoking." Ding-*ge* came downstairs at that moment and rushed over to confiscate the cigarettes. "You should also smoke a little less. A kid from the LPL got lung cancer last year, he was barely in his twenties!"

“That’s just because he wasn’t in good shape. Look at these guys, they’re all big and strong…” Fu-*ge* swept his gaze over everyone present before pausing. “Except that little bluenette, the rest of them would be fine even if they smoked for sixty years.”

Jian Rong: “?”

“I wanted to say something earlier.” Fu-*ge* frowned. “Little bluenette, how come you’re so skinny? Short and small, like a girl. When you guys all go out to compete, they’re gonna think that *laozi* mistreats the team.”

Those words were equivalent to holding a concert with ten thousand people in Jian Rong’s minefield.

Everyone else sucked in a breath of air, afraid that Jian Rong would start going at the owner in a fit of fury.

“We’re feeding him.” Lu Boyuan’s voice was mild. “He’s already gained much more weight compared to when he first got here.”

Fu-*ge* was totally unaware of the surrounding atmosphere. He said, “Feed him, feed him a lot. Once he becomes like Xiao Bai, pale and plump, that’s what’s healthy. If the food expenses aren’t enough, come ask me for more. Little bluenette, remember to eat properly every day, got it?”

The little bluenette gripped his chopsticks tightly. A long, long time later, he squeezed out through clenched teeth: “…got it, boss.”

Fu-*ge* nodded with satisfaction. “Oh right, I haven’t given you all a raise in over half a year, have I? I’ll let them know to increase your monthly income

by twenty percent."

After he finished the cigarette, Fu-*ge* really did end up calling Ding-*ge* over to the meeting room to discuss the raise.

After the owner left, Xiao Bai patted his chest. "Shit, just now I was super afraid you were gonna smash your bowl over Boss' head."

Jian Rong ducked his head and ate. "Do you think I'm a dumbass?"

Xiao Bai went silent for a moment. Very insincerely, he said, "Of course… not."

Jian Rong was too lazy to explain anything to him.

"Fu-*ge* is from Guangdong." Lu Boyuan, who was next to him, suddenly spoke quietly. "I'm not clear on what happened in the past, but six years ago, when I just met him, he owned a dozen or so buildings that he rented out in Guangdong."

Jian Rong paused. Abruptly, he felt like today's rice tasted a little sour.

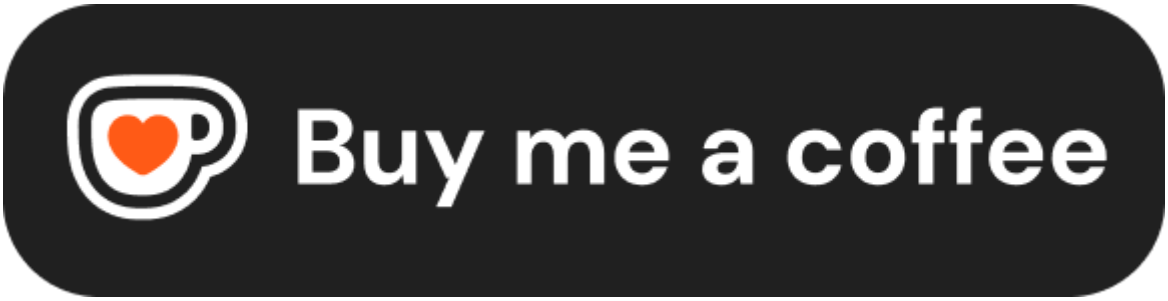
"Not long after he bought the team, those buildings ended up being demolished[2]… then he threw himself into real estate." Lu Boyuan concluded simply, "He makes a living doing honest work, not anything else. Don't worry, you didn't enter a den of thieves."

After his thoughts were exposed once more, Jian Rong unconsciously remembered what happened last night.

When he recalled the videos he was looking at the previous night, that groundless sense of guilt surged through him again. Jian Rong cleared his throat before he lowered his head and shoveled food into his mouth. “I didn’t think that.”

Translation Notes

1. *It’s literally the ‘Fu’ for rich* ^
2. *I think this is referring to China’s mass urbanization projects in Guangdong (Shenzhen, Guangzhou, etc), resulting in many ‘urban villages’ being wiped out. Here’s an article on it!* ^



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ICDI Chapter 72: Jian Rong had an impulsive temper and spoke harshly.

Thanks to juuree for the Ko-fi!

At 11 PM, everyone was still stuck in the practice room. The amount of training had increased recently, and after a few consecutive days of it, everyone looked a bit tired.

Except for Jian Rong.

He wore a focused expression, and his brows were furrowed very slightly. “Xiao Bai, give me a speed boost and shield, I’m gonna tower dive and kill their mid laner…”

Before he could finish, Xiao Bai’s Lulu raised her magic wand. With a *thunk*, he slaughtered the minion right in front of Jian Rong.

Xiao Bai: “…”

Jian Rong: “.”

Xiao Bai: “If I said I was extremely sleepy so I rubbed my eyes and then gripped my mouse a little too hard so I accidentally killed your minion—would you believe me?”

Jian Rong’s in-game character froze in place for quite a few seconds before it continued pushing forward. He spat out coldly, “Three.”

Xiao Bai said, stupefied, “Three what?”

Jian Rong: “Since I joined the team, you’ve stolen three minions from me in total.”

“??” Xiao Bai regained his energy. “Are you a grudge-holding spirit?!”

Jian Rong said frostily, “Who made you run over to my mid lane to sleepwalk? Can’t you go screw over Pine?”

Pine: “No. I’m a solo laner tonight, you guys do whatever you want.”

“Play properly. It’s the last match, after this we can rest.” Lu Boyuan checked his gold. “I need 200 more gold to buy Black Cleaver, we can team fight once I get it.”

Jian Rong withdrew when he heard that. “Come eat this wave of minions at mid, I’m going back to base.”

“Okay.”

“?” Xiao Bai felt like this was unreasonable. “I eat one of your minions, and you write my name down in your grudge book, but when my *ge* comes, you immediately let him have a whole wave of minions??”

Jian Rong paused. “Did you not hear him? He’s 200 gold away from buying Black Cleaver.”

“I’m also 200 gold away from buying Ardent Censer, so what?” Xiao Bai said seriously, “There’s no such thing as idols in practice matches. Please be a little more professional, don’t bring your love for my *ge* into the game…”

Lu Boyuan's champion halted for a second before he directly and efficiently cleared the wave of minions.

"Like hell I'm bringing…" Jian Rong grinded his teeth. "I just look down on supports, that's all, and I don't want to let supports have any gold. What about it?"

"Damn." Xiao Bai said, "I'm gonna repeat what you just said in its entirety to your fans who play support. You're finished."

Though Jian Rong said that, he still ended up flashing in and saving Xiao Bai in the ensuing team fight, at the cost of being instakilled by two clicks of the enemy mid laner's spells.

Xiao Bai said, touched, "On behalf of supports, I forgive you…"

"No need." Jian Rong opened the shop to buy items. "Doing this makes me seem a little weaker, this way the opposing team won't target me when we're playing against them in a match."

Xiao Bai: "."

Right after they won the game, Ding-*ge* walked in and announced that their training was finished for the day. He told them to go downstairs to eat midnight snacks.

"I've already played two mahjong games, and you guys only just finished practice?" Fu-*ge* was sitting on the sofa, watching TV. At the sound of movement, he didn't bother looking over as he said, "Come, eat midnight snacks. I got someone to buy a little seafood."

He said "*a little*," but in reality, the coffee table was almost completely covered by red plastic bags filled with all kinds of processed seafood.

Originally, Jian Rong wasn't very hungry, but his stomach couldn't help but grumble once he smelled the fragrance of salt and pepper.

They sat down directly on the carpet and started eating.

"I heard Lao Ding say that you guys are guaranteed to enter the playoffs?" Fu-*ge* lit a cigarette. "If you play well in the spring season this time and place in the top three, I'll give everyone a big red envelope."

Ding-*ge* instantly said, "What top three? We're aiming to be the champion."

"If you become the champion…" Fu-*ge* pondered briefly. "In addition to the red envelopes, I'll also give each person a car?"

Jian Rong: "?"

Lu Boyuan looked down to see their team's mid laner get smashed by the car that dropped from the sky, after which Jian Rong became distracted and proceeded to viciously prick himself on the thorny shell of the mantis shrimp. He sucked in a breath through his teeth from the pain.

Jian Rong was indeed distracted. He was thinking—

What color car should he pick?

He had to find some time to get his driver's license.

He would probably have to spend some money to buy a parking spot too…

As he was lost in his thoughts, someone grabbed his wrist and tugged it over.

Lu Boyuan wrapped a napkin around Jian Rong's index finger and pressed his thumb, through the napkin, against the place where Jian Rong was bleeding.

Driver's license, parking lot, whatever, it all flew out of his head immediately. For a few short seconds, Jian Rong was only able to feel the warmth of Lu Boyuan's finger and the sound of his own heartbeat.

"Boss, you're amazing!" At once, Xiao Bai felt like the seafood in his hand was no longer appetizing. "Then I'm done eating, I'm going to practice. Boss, decide what car brand you're gonna buy from first, and I'll let you know which car I want right after the spring season is over!!"

Xiao Bai was hauled back by Pine, who asked coolly, "With your playing condition tonight, who are you trying to screw over in ranked? Eat first."

Yuan Qian rubbed his hands. "Does that mean I'll have my wedding car?"

"It's your car, you guys pick. You can choose anything that's under two million, I won't intervene." Fu-*ge* propped his elbow up on the couch cushion, the words "*nouveau riche*" written all over him. "Since it's Xiao Qian's wedding car, you can pick a more expensive model… what kind of car does Xiao Lu like?"

Lu Boyuan released Jian Rong's finger. After confirming that it was no longer bleeding, he threw away the napkin and looked up. "Anything's fine."

Fu-*ge* nodded. “That’s true, it’s not like you need a car from me. What about the little bluenette? Little bluenette, you got a car yet?”

The little bluenette was called out twice, and he silently retracted his hand. “Not yet.”

“Then think about it carefully. After all, this is your very first car.” Fu-*ge* finished off his cigarette before he patted his thighs and stood up. “Oh right, I lost track of time playing mahjong. If I go back now, I’m going to be scolded by my wife, so I have to stay the night. I’ll tell her tomorrow that I was playing games here… One of you should clear out your room for me.”

Everyone else was startled.

Ding-*ge* promptly said, “I can take you to a hotel outside.”

Fu-*ge* shook his head. “That won’t do, my wife is extremely clever. She’ll check my hotel reservation history, and it doesn’t work if someone else uses their identity card either… in short, she’ll always be able to find out. Also, I don’t feel like going through all that trouble.”

Xiao Bai reminded him, “Boss, we have guest rooms in our base.”

“I know.” Fu-*ge* threw away his cigarette. “I looked at them earlier. Those guest rooms look like they’ve been unoccupied for several centuries now, they smell too strongly and the bedding’s dirty. Uninhabitable.”

As Fu-*ge* spoke, he really did end up going upstairs to pick a room.

Xiao Bai instantly howled, “Boss my room is full of stinky socks!! It smells even worse than those empty rooms!!!”

Yuan Qian also said, “Boss, my room isn’t too convenient either. My toilet is broken, property management is only coming to fix it tomorrow.”

Pine said calmly, “I don’t have a bed in my room, I’ve been sleeping on the floor these past few days.”

Lu Boyuan contemplated for a moment. “I…”

“Actually, I’ve already made my decision.” Fu-*ge* said, “I’m staying in Xiao Lu’s room, his bed is big. Xiao Lu, go and squeeze with someone else tonight?”

Half an hour later, Jian Rong stared at the extra pillow that appeared on his bed, feeling a bit lost.

Outside his door, Ding-*ge* was saying in a lowered voice, “Boss drank some alcohol earlier in the evening and fought a little with his wife, so just let him sleep in your room. I’ll tell the auntie to change out your bedding tomorrow.”

Lu Boyuan went silent for two seconds before he said, “Got it.”

Ding-*ge* nodded. He was about to leave when he saw Jian Rong pick up his blanket in the room and survey the floor.

Ding-*ge* frowned. “Jian Rong, what are you doing?”

Jian Rong didn't look up. "Finding the best location for me to sleep on the ground."

"You don't have to." Lu Boyuan said, "This is your room. If anyone should be sleeping on the ground, it's me. You sleep on the bed."

Jian Rong didn't even think about it. "How could I make you sleep on the floor…"

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. He was about to say something, but he was interrupted by Ding-*ge*.

"*Ai*, that's not it…" Ding-*ge* was bewildered. "What's wrong with two grown men sleeping in the same bed? Why does someone have to sleep on the ground??"

Jian Rong stared blankly.

Lu Boyuan turned his head and glanced at him, seemingly accidentally.

Ding-*ge* didn't notice that anything was amiss. "Do you think it's too crowded? Jian Rong's bed is a bit smaller, but there's more than enough room for both of you to fit… it's already harsh enough on your bodies sitting in front of the computers every day, if you go and sleep on the floor too, do you even want your back anymore? Listen to me, just squeeze together for the night, nobody's allowed to sleep on the floor!"

After Ding-*ge* left, Lu Boyuan closed the door and looked back to see Jian Rong still standing in his original spot, hugging his blanket. For some reason, he seemed a little silly.

Lu Boyuan restrained a smile and negotiated with him, “I’ll sleep on the ground.”

Jian Rong refused at once. “No.”

Lu Boyuan said, “In that case, let’s sleep together.”

In short, there was no option for Jian Rong to sleep on the ground.

Jian Rong didn’t move or speak. A beat later, Lu Boyuan understood something, and he picked up his pillow before he started to put it on the ground—

“…let’s sleep together then.” Jian Rong’s left hand gripped his blanket while he energetically raked through his hair with his right hand. He ducked his head and didn’t look at Lu Boyuan. “But I don’t have good sleeping habits, if I do something in the middle of the night… you can just kick me straight off the bed.”

In reality, Jian Rong didn’t know how he behaved after he fell asleep either, but every time he woke up in the morning, more than half of his blanket could usually be found on the ground. His posture was also always different from the position he had fallen asleep in.

After returning the blankets and pillows to their original positions, Jian Rong absent-mindedly picked up his clothes and went to shower.

Lu Boyuan came over after showering in his own room first. He sat down on the bed and answered a few messages before he couldn’t help but lift his head and look around Jian Rong’s room.

It was much messier than it had been when Jian Rong first moved in—well, it couldn't be called messy; it now contained the aura of someone living there.

Two pieces of clothing were thrown over the back of a chair. A hat was slung casually over the headboard, and the desk was a bit chaotic. Jian Rong's phone sat crookedly on his bed.

Meanwhile, the wooden coat rack that the clothing items and hats should've been hung up on was completely bare. The only thing hanging from it was a pair of underwear.

White with black edges, quite small in size. Action Mask[1] was printed on the back, and it looked like Jian Rong had just taken it back to his room not too long ago after air-drying it.

Lu Boyuan paused, averted his eyes, and lowered his head to continue replying to texts.

Soon after, he heard the water stop in the bathroom.

Then, five minutes passed.

Ten minutes.

Fifteen minutes…

Lu Boyuan tossed his phone onto the bed, stood up, and picked up the article of clothing from the coat rack before he knocked on the bathroom door.

The person inside asked swiftly, “What’s wrong?”

Lu Boyuan said, “Open the door.”

A moment later, the bathroom door was opened. Nearly all the steam inside had dissipated already. Jian Rong tilted his head to the side, revealing half of his face; his wet hair stuck to his forehead, and the depths of his eyes glistened slightly. There were still drops of water stuck to the tip of his nose and his eyelashes.

Lu Boyuan met his gaze quietly for a few seconds. Then, he held up the underwear in his hand.

He was holding it very politely, only pinching one corner. He didn’t touch any other part of it.

Jian Rong, who had searched through his pile of clothing for quite some time and was unwilling to face the reality that he had forgotten to bring underwear in with him: “……”

Jian Rong numbly took the underwear from Lu Boyuan and squeezed out a “*thank you*” from his throat.

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes. “Mn.”

It took Jian Rong two seconds to realize that Lu Boyuan was staring at his… Action Mask. “…discount, 70% off, that’s why I bought it.”

Lu Boyuan gave another “en.”

Jian Rong: “Really, my other pairs don’t have this kind of design on them…”

Lu Boyuan blinked, and then laughed.

Jian Rong watched him laugh, while he himself froze completely on the spot.

What the fuck am I saying?

"Pretty cute." Lu Boyuan consolingly gave him a final evaluation and said, "Put them on, then come out and sleep. We still have practice tomorrow."

Jian Rong exploded a little.

However, he could only explode internally; he didn't dare to display a bit of it on the outside. He put on his clothes, exited the bathroom, got in bed, and turned off the light—then, he laid there flat on his back like an ancient mummy, placing both hands interlocked with each other over his stomach.

There was indeed enough room for both of them on Jian Rong's bed. There was even still a fairly wide gap remaining between them.

Lu Boyuan was already asleep. His breathing was steady, and his blanket rose and fell very slowly.

Jian Rong let out an extremely long exhale before he pursed his lips and decided to sleep, but when he closed his eyes, his mind was full of the image of Lu Boyuan's hand holding his underwear.

That was a world champion's hand!!! Like hell your damn underwear has any rights!!!

Feeling a bit of deja vu over those words, Jian Rong cursed in his head before he reached out and rubbed his face.

A few seconds later, something suddenly vibrated.

Jian Rong was startled, and it took him quite a while to realize that it was coming from the phone that he had thrown onto the bed.

He subconsciously stretched his hand under the blanket, searching in the direction of the vibration. Then, he gripped onto a warm and soft source of heat.

This sensation was one that Jian Rong had felt a mere hour ago.

As if he had touched something that couldn't be touched, Jian Rong instantaneously released Lu Boyuan's hand and rapidly picked up his phone to turn off vibrations. He dropped it on the table without even bothering to check his messages, before he closed his eyes and forced himself to fall asleep.

Jian Rong practiced the most every day, and also the hardest. Approximately half an hour later, Jian Rong's breathing thoroughly evened out.

In the darkness, Lu Boyuan slowly opened his eyes, and his fingers, which had just been held, twitched very slightly. A long time passed, but the sensation on his fingers still didn't dissipate. Just like the scent of milky shower gel lingering in the room, its presence was scorching and potent.

After an indeterminate amount of time went by, he finally closed his eyes again and regathered the strands of sleep.

Just as he was about to fall asleep, the person next to him shifted.

Recently, Shanghai's temperature was going back up, so the base didn't turn the heating on anymore. Late at night, the temperature inside was less than 20 degrees Celsius[2].

When Jian Rong moved closer, for once, Lu Boyuan was stunned.

Jian Rong really wasn't trying to be modest when he said that he had an awful sleeping posture.

He liked to kick off his blankets while sleeping, but in this kind of weather, if his hands or feet were exposed outside, it was very easy for him to wake up from the cold. As a result, the dreaming Jian Rong reflexively sought out the only warm thing on the bed.

Their arms pressed together underneath the blanket. This turn of events happened too quickly, so Lu Boyuan didn't even think to dodge him.

Jian Rong had already changed to sleeping on his side. His head drooped downwards, and he pressed his forehead against Lu Boyuan's shoulder. In order to find a comfortable spot, he even rubbed his face against him.

Lu Boyuan was wearing short sleeves, so Jian Rong rubbing against his shoulder didn't actually matter that much…

Jian Rong's arm was very slender, but he had still ended up putting some meat on his bones.

Jian Rong had an impulsive temper and spoke harshly, but his body was exceptionally soft. Fingers, arms, ears… all of it.

Lu Boyuan's Adam's apple bobbed lightly, and he shut his eyes. A few seconds later, he frowned and opened his eyes again. He lifted his hand and carefully placed it over Jian Rong's forehead before he very gently nudged him back towards his own spot.

Jian Rong ducked his head, and Lu Boyuan's fingers sank into his hair.

Lu Boyuan looked down at him for a moment before he ruffled his hair with extreme helplessness and decided to give up.

Then, Jian Rong suddenly bent his leg and hooked it upwards, the way he usually did when he was hugging his pillow—he didn't manage to hook onto anything; he only stroked very lightly against Lu Boyuan's calf.

Lu Boyuan's breathing caught in his throat, and one… countless not so good thoughts emerged in his head.

He was given a start by these thoughts, but at the same time, he vaguely felt like it was to be expected.

Every second passed by particularly slowly at night. Some unknown amount of time later, Lu Boyuan spoke: "Jian Rong."

His voice was hoarse, and he said, "If you don't get up soon…"

If he didn't get up soon, then what?

Lu Boyuan was momentarily stalled.

In that beat of silence, Jian Rong abruptly moved.

Lu Boyuan thought that he had woken up, but unexpectedly, Jian Rong only lifted his chin a bit. His eyes were still closed as he murmured, "Zhuang Yibai…

"Five minions…

"You're dead…"

Translation Notes

1. *A cartoon superhero from a manga* ^
2. *68 degrees Fahrenheit* ^

Yan: Thank the heavens, thank the earth, thank you Ding-*ge* for giving us the There Is Only One Bed trope *bows three times*

Wei: Let's all praise Ding-*ge*, unwitting matchmaker~

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 73: !

Lu Boyuan's brows furrowed before quickly relaxing again.

What kind of dream was he having.

A while later, he asked lowly in return, "Wasn't it three minions?"

Of course, nobody answered him.

Jian Rong had just finished showering, and his arm was somewhat cool. Lu Boyuan stared off into the darkness as he felt the arm pressed against his own slowly heat up, until it maintained a very warm temperature.

Earlier that night, Ding-*ge* had asked him who he wanted to sleep with, or if he would rather have a guest room tidied up for him instead. Although the smell was strong, it wasn't impossible to bear for one evening.

Lu Boyuan's eyes were lowered as he listened to him finish speaking. Then, he picked up his pillow and threw it onto Jian Rong's bed.

"Dumbass troll…" Due to being too exhausted, the person next to him started to ramble in his sleep unintelligibly again. "I'm your dad…"

Lu Boyuan blinked once, slowly.

"…not wearing a skirt."

Lu Boyuan said softly, "Mn."

"Your dad… the world's number one mid laner."

"…"

Lu Boyuan wanted to laugh, but then his smile froze on his face.

Jian Rong suddenly lifted a hand and placed it on Lu Boyuan's body. Separated by a thin layer of clothing, his fingers pressed down a few times on Lu Boyuan's abdomen, as if he was pressing the keys for his skills in game.

Lu Boyuan could even distinctly detect that Jian Rong's skill rotation was "QRWEQ" — LeBlanc's kill combo. In the middle of it, Jian Rong also found time to hit the key for Ignite down below.

Lu Boyuan: "…"

Lu Boyuan grabbed his wrist and moved his hand away before he stiffly sat up in bed.

He heard Jian Rong give a stupid chuckle and mumble, "Go die for your granddad…"

With this kind of attitude, it probably wouldn't be too long until he won the S11 World Championship in his dreams.

This was Lu Boyuan's first time realizing that someone could sleep like this. Back then, when he used to share a dorm with Xiao Bai and the rest, the worst it ever got was snores and teeth grinding.

Lu Boyuan's breathing was a little heavy. He turned on the bedside lamp, and the weak, dusky yellow light barely managed to illuminate a corner of

the room.

Jian Rong's shirt was disheveled from sleep, exposing his long and slender neck, as well as part of a sunken collarbone. His left hand was spread out flat on the spot where Lu Boyuan was just lying down.

Half a minute later, Lu Boyuan cast his eyes downward before he reached out and pinched Jian Rong's lips, which had been moving almost the entire night.

…

When Jian Rong woke up, he was still somewhat immersed in his dreams.

Most of his face was buried in his pillow, and he had somehow ended up in a starfish position in his sleep, nearly occupying the entire bed.

Jian Rong closed his eyes again, reflecting back on his earlier dream—

In his dream, he won the championship and requested his car, a black Mercedes-Benz. Fu-*ge* had also transferred him a big red envelope. After he finished sneering at those antis in his livestream room, he took his red envelope money and went to register for driving school. At the end, he was in the middle of arguing with the driving school instructor in the car, and they had decided to 1v1 each other…

What a good dream.

With his eyes shut, he groped around for his phone on his bed for a while. Once he found it, he brought it up to his face and unlocked it—

[Ding-*ge*: Auntie made some congee, and there's soy milk in the fridge. You and Xiao Lu can eat that when you're awake.]

After Jian Rong read that message, he was stupefied for a full thirty seconds before he sat bolt upright and tugged aside the blanket to check underneath it—apart from him and air, there was nothing else.

Where was Lu Boyuan?

Such a big Lu Boyuan, where did he go???

A crisp *ding* rang out from behind him.

Gripping his blanket, Jian Rong slowly turned his head.

Lu Boyuan was sitting on the ground with his knees up and his back against the wall. His pillow was thrown casually next to him, and it was unclear how long he had been sitting there already.

Jian Rong never pulled shut the thick blackout curtains in his room, so the midday sunlight streamed through the flimsy decorative curtains and beat down warmly on Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan finished replying to a text before he looked up and made eye contact with Jian Rong, who was sitting on his bed with a shocked, bewildered, and helpless expression.

Jian Rong: "Why are you sitting on the floor?"

Lu Boyuan said in return: "You tell me."

His voice sounded like he had pulled an all-nighter playing practice matches.

Jian Rong's eyes rolled around for quite a while. "...I kicked you down?"

Lu Boyuan just watched him and didn't reply.

Jian Rong thought that he had guessed correctly. He closed his eyes and swore in his mind. "My bad. The moment I fall asleep, my legs stop obeying me... why didn't you wake me up?"

It was hardly just his legs that had stopped obeying him?

"It wasn't because you kicked me." Lu Boyuan stood up, and his legs felt a little numb from sitting for too long. He slipped his phone into his pocket. "I came to sleep down here on my own."

"Why?" Jian Rong asked, "Did I snore?"

"You..."

Right now, as long as he made up some random excuse, like he was used to sleeping alone, he could muddle his way past this.

Lu Boyuan paused for a while before he said, "Pinned down my hand."

Their practice match was later in the afternoon that day, and Xiao Bai slept all the way until it was almost noon before he got up.

He yawned as he went downstairs. When he saw the situation on the living room couch, he forcibly stopped halfway through his yawn, and his mouth

hung open comically for quite some time before he finally closed it.

He saw his *ge* sitting on the couch, lazily watching a match recording.

Meanwhile, their mid laner… sat cross-legged next to his *ge* and was in the middle of massaging his *ge*'s hand. At first glance, with his lowered head and careful, attentive movements, he looked like a little damn wife.

"Where does it hurt?" Jian Rong stopped his motions and grabbed Lu Boyuan's hand. He said seriously, "Maybe it would still be best to go to the hospital, or call the doctor over to the base. I'll pay for the house call fee and medical expenses."

Lu Boyuan was about to say something when someone pushed open the front door to the base.

The moment Ding-*ge* entered the house, his eyes fell on Lu Boyuan's hand.

When Lu Boyuan saw who had arrived, he let out a very light "*tsk*" in his mind.

"Told you already, it's fine." Lu Boyuan drew his hand back. "Let's go eat breakfast."

Jian Rong said anxiously, "How could it be fine?! I'm so heavy, and I pinned you down the entire night…"

Xiao Bai: "?"

Ding-*ge*: "???"

Lu Boyuan was also stunned for a very short moment. Then he suddenly asked, “How much do you weigh right now?”

“57 kilograms[1].” Afraid that Lu Boyuan wouldn’t believe him, Jian Rong said, “I just weighed myself the other day.”

“57 kilograms, like hell you’re heavy?!” Xiao Bai couldn’t keep listening. He ranted angrily as he sat down on the sofa, “You’re not even at the standard body weight and yet you go around shouting all day long about being heavy. You’re the male version of green tea[2]!!”

Jian Rong: “……how about I pin your hand down and test it out?”

“Then do it!” Xiao Bai rolled up his sleeves. “I can even lift you up with one arm!”

Jian Rong choked before he remembered how Xiao Bai had stolen two more of his minions in his dreams last night. He said coldly, “Shut up, I don’t want to interact with deadweight players.”

“?!” Xiao Bai laughed bitterly and fished out his phone. “I’m going to contact the Support Protection Association right now and completely destroy this little bluenette’s reputation…”

As Jian Rong was bickering with Xiao Bai, their remaining two teammates also woke up and came downstairs.

Pine sat down next to Xiao Bai and started playing on his phone, looking like he had gotten up on the wrong side of the bed. Yuan Qian directly threw his head back and reclined in a chair.

“Where’s Boss?” Yuan Qian asked.

Xiao Bai said faintly, “Seems like he went back.”

Ding-*ge* restrained the urge to interrogate Lu Boyuan. “You got up so late, why’re you still sleepy?”

“I was scrolling through a video app for too long yesterday… I’ve already uninstalled it.” Yuan Qian rubbed his forehead before he thought of something and glanced to his side. “Didn’t Xiao Rong also sleep quite late last night?”

Jian Rong said, “No.”

He also thought that he wouldn’t be able to fall asleep, but unexpectedly, his body’s instincts had overpowered his mind’s excitement. He had felt sleepy the moment he touched the bed.

Yuan Qian: “But around four in the morning, I was in the hallway and I saw that your bathroom light was still on.”

Jian Rong: “?”

Yuan Qian recalled, “There was the sound of water too, I thought that you were taking a shower…”

Lu Boyuan said, “That was me.”

Jian Rong looked blankly at Lu Boyuan. How come he hadn’t heard a single thing?

Yuan Qian said, startled, “Why’d you only shower at four AM? Not worried about catching a cold?”

Lu Boyuan said succinctly, “Washing my face.”

Why get out of bed at four to wash his face? Yuan Qian felt even more confused, and he opened his mouth to ask about it.

Ding-*ge* frowned. “Wait a minute, what were you doing out in the hallway at four in the morning and not sleeping?”

Yuan Qian: “……”

Ding-*ge* hit the nail on the head. “Smoking, is that it?”

“No! Impossible! I was just going to get some air!”

“You’re not good at lying at all.” Ding-*ge* smiled coldly, “Transfer me the money and hand over the cigarettes. Be a little more obedient, don’t follow bad examples.”

After breakfast, Lu Boyuan went to the break room by himself to make some coffee. He hadn’t slept last night, so he needed to rely on some other things in order to wake up.

Ding-*ge* walked into the break room and closed the door.

Lu Boyuan didn’t even need to guess to know why he was here.

Sure enough, Ding-*ge* instantly asked anxiously, “Your hand got pinned down? Where was it pinned, does it hurt? Don’t make coffee, I’ll take you to

the hospital to get an X-ray, hurry up."

"Doesn't hurt." Lu Boyuan said mildly, "It wasn't pinned down."

"BS, I already heard you say it." Ding-*ge* furrowed his brows. "If it's serious, maybe you shouldn't play in the match against PUD tomorrow."

"Told you, it wasn't pinned down." Lu Boyuan pressed the button on the coffee machine. "I was just teasing him."

"It's one regular season match, nothing more, don't overexert yourself…" Ding-*ge* paused before he narrowed his eyes and asked, "What?"

"I said, I was just teasing him." Lu Boyuan said dismissively.

Ding-*ge* went quiet for a moment and confirmed from Lu Boyuan's expression that he didn't seem to be making up nonsense.

Ding-*ge* was even more puzzled. "Why would you tease him for no reason?"

Lu Boyuan laughed. "You guess."

"?" A thought flashed through Ding-*ge*'s mind. "So that he would massage your hand?"

Lu Boyuan didn't reply, as if he was tacitly agreeing.

"……what, do the team's countless licensed physiotherapists no longer satisfy you?" Ding-*ge* asked, "So you had to go and trick the mid laner I spent 1.4 million yuan on, whose contract next season might be worth even

more than if the one and the four were flipped, into massaging your hand for you?"

Actually, Lu Boyuan hadn't intended for Jian Rong to massage his hand. They were both professional gamers, so their wrists were all precious. For it to have happened once already was enough; he would be reluctant to have it occur again too.

But when Jian Rong had picked up his hand and clasped it between his own…

"That's right." Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes. "Why would a new and competitive mid laner signed for over a million yuan, who's being watched by the entire LPL and has a boundless future ahead of him, be willing to obediently massage my hand for me?"

Ding-*ge*: "?"

Lu Boyuan picked up his coffee. "What do you think was going through his head."

It was a question, but it didn't sound like one at all. He didn't seem to need an answer either.

Ding-*ge* looked completely bewildered. He thought, *I'd rather know what's going through your head right now*.

They were playing against PUD the next day, so as soon as the others finished eating, they went back to the practice room.

Jian Rong went into the Practice Tool to warm up his hands. Not too long into his training, he heard Xiao Bai ramble aloud next to him, “Yup, I can only stream for a while. We have a practice match in two hours… tomorrow’s match? Of course I have faith in us!”

Jian Rong glanced at his screen. Xiao Bai was streaming.

He and Xiao Bai could be considered the two people in the team who were the most diligent about streaming.

“P-baby? He’s here, right next to me, we’re about to duo queue.” Xiao Bai covered his mouth and burped. “Ate a little too much for breakfast… P-baby didn’t finish his food, so I cleaned it up for him.”

The CP fans promptly began thoughtfully spamming gifts.

Jian Rong plugged in his earphones and started to put them on.

Xiao Bai: “Why isn’t Soft streaming… we’ve been very busy lately with our practice matches, even I don’t really stream that much anymore. Don’t worry, he’s doing pretty well. Currently, he’s already fattened up to 57 kilograms.”

[Say that one more time? Fattened up to how many kg???]

[Tell him that Dad misses him a lot, and he shouldn’t work too hard all by himself out there. If he has time, he should come back home often and visit.]

[Going to the stadium tomorrow, ask him if he can give Dad an autograph if you guys win. If you lose, I'll stop being a dad.]

[How come Soft and Road haven't been duo Q'ing together recently?! They only played a few games together the day before yesterday! I just started shipping this CP, did it already BE TAT!!!]

"No no no, how could it BE!" Xiao Bai swept a look at the person next to him before he cupped his hand next to his mouth and said, "They slept with each other last night!"

Jian Rong froze along with the barrage for half a second, and his face immediately burned red-hot. "I slept with your granddad!!!"

[?]

[?? Is that something you're allowed to tell us?!]

[Damn, is it your team's style to be this fucking open???]

[My God Lu? Slept with someone???]

[……my son is gone?]

"Holy shit, weren't you wearing earphones? How come you're eavesdropping?" Xiao Bai was given a scare. "I meant—they slept together on the same bed. Of course, they didn't do anything at all hah."

[If they did do it, like hell they'd let you know?]

[How do you know they didn't do anything at all, were you sleeping under their bed?]

Lu Boyuan opened the door and entered.

Jian Rong panicked even more. Fuming with rage, he enunciated, one word at a time, "Absolutely nothing happened… and we didn't sleep together either."

[Well certainly, whatever you say, I suppose.]

[I know you guys didn't do anything, I'm just laying out the groundwork in advance. If the two of you really do end up doing some things together in the future, make sure to take appropriate measures and protect yourself, Daddy loves you.]

[It's no good, I still can't accept the fact that my son is gay, I'm going to smoke.]

[Do you think I can accept the fact that my husband is gay???]

"What are you talking about?" Lu Boyuan asked, coffee in his hand as he looked at the barrage.

Xiao Bai instantly explained, "Nothing much, just talking about how you and Jian Rong slept together last night."

[TTC's base is enormous, and the members definitely all have their own rooms. Why would you sleep together?]

[Forget single rooms, just in terms of empty rooms they probably have quite a few.]

[My son said that last night you two were under the blankets, purely chatting. Fucking hell, he doesn't even bother thinking through his lies.]

[No, he said that they didn't sleep together, meaning that God Lu slept on the ground last night.]

[What a joke, the team's management basically worships God Lu like a deity, would they let him sleep on the floor?]

[So what exactly did you guys do last night!!]

Lu Boyuan glanced down at Jian Rong.

At that moment, Jian Rong was on the verge of soloing Xiao Bai on the spot, in real life. Sensing Lu Boyuan's gaze, he raised his head and looked back before he could hide the vengefulness in his eyes in time.

Lu Boyuan paused for a second before he laughed and told the water friends, "Let's just go with whatever he said."

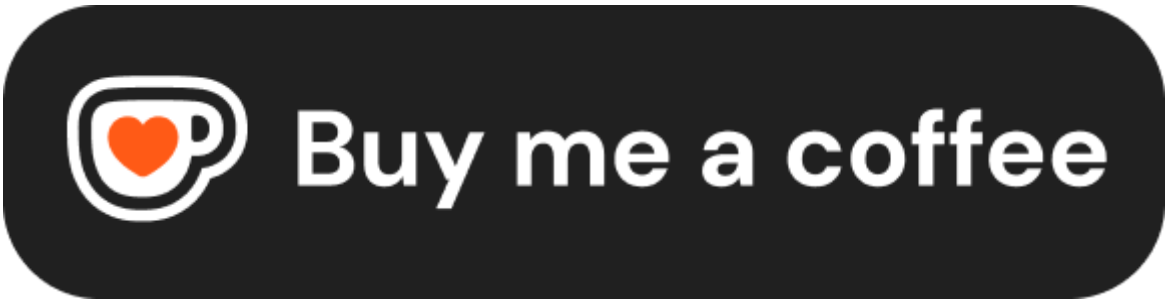
An extremely helpless tone of voice, like he wanted to say something but couldn't.

After that, Lu Boyuan returned to his own computer with his coffee, leaving behind Jian Rong, who had question marks written all over his face, and the water friends, who were furiously spamming "*understood*" in Xiao Bai's stream.

Translation Notes

1. *~125 pounds* ^
2. *Green tea as in green tea bitch* ^

Yan: [my fellow dads who understand, comment ‘understood’] 😉



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ICDI Chapter 74: .

Because of what happened with the stream, the flimsy friendship between TTC's mid laner and support temporarily shattered for a day.

Or rather, their mid laner one-sidedly cut off their support for a day.

In the practice match, Xiao Bai, as Leona, walked towards the mid lane. "I'm coming to mid to help you gank a wave."

As Jian Rong finished eating his minions, his blue buff also ran out, and he directly went back to base. "Don't come."

Xiao Bai: "Don't be like that. I have my flash and my ult, we can definitely kill them."

"I can kill them on my own." Jian Rong asked coolly, "Do you see the ward I placed next to the river?"

Xiao Bai: "?"

Jian Rong said, "Before the first turret in your bot lane is destroyed, don't take a step past that ward, and all will be well. Got it?"

"…"

Xiao Bai said, wronged, "I just blurted out a fact without thinking, do you have to go this far? I also often say that I'm going to crawl into P-baby's bed at night ah! Actually, the fans only take this sort of thing at face value, they won't really think that you and my *ge* did you-know-what—"

Jian Rong's fingers paused. Syndra, who was in the middle of recalling to base, took a step forward and canceled the action. At the same time, Lu Boyuan's Sett just happened to pass by him.

Jian Rong could tell that Lu Boyuan was on his way to clear the wolf camp. When Lu Boyuan saw Jian Rong cancel his animation to go back to base, he also stopped alongside him.

One mid laner and one jungler inexplicably froze under their team's tower for two seconds.

Jian Rong: "…"

Jian Rong resisted the urge to stuff the mouse into Xiao Bai's mouth, and he squeezed out from between his teeth, "Shut up."

They won six practice matches that night and lost one. After they finished, they went over to the meeting room.

Three coaches were present today. The three of them started off by discussing the ban and pick phase for their match against PUD the next day, chiming in one after another. The team members all sat in their respective chairs and played on their phones while waiting for the review of the practice matches to begin.

Lu Boyuan sat in a relaxed posture and listened to the coaches extremely casually, up until he sensed the person sitting next to him repeatedly glance in his direction.

The fourth time Jian Rong peeked over, Lu Boyuan turned his head and asked, “What is it?”

“…nothing.” Jian Rong was holding his phone with two hands. A few seconds later, he spoke again. “The animal hospital sent me some pictures of Little Orange.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Let me see.”

Jian Rong had been getting by on his own ever since he was quite young, so he wasn’t very accustomed to seeking out others and sharing things with them.

As a result, he stared blankly for half a beat when he heard what Lu Boyuan said, before he handed his phone over.

Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and flipped through the photos one by one, only stopping for about a second on each picture.

Right when he was about to reach the end, the phone suddenly vibrated, and a Weibo push notification popped up at the top of Jian Rong’s phone screen—

[[Special follow] When Will TTC’s Mid Laner And Jungler Battle In Bed: Drew some NSFW today. [image]]

Jian Rong’s mind went blank.

Jian Rong only had two special follows on his Weibo side account. One was Lu Boyuan, and the other was this Weibo artist.

This artist frequently drew Lu Boyuan. Later on… they would occasionally draw Jian Rong next to Lu Boyuan.

However! When Jian Rong first followed them, their art was extremely! Extremely! Extremely normal!! Either he and Lu Boyuan were sitting side by side on stage, or they had just won a match and were bowing…

Their Weibo username was also definitely not this before!

Jian Rong wanted to explain, but he halted the moment he opened his mouth.

How to explain this?

I didn't follow them in order to see porn, it was just because I wanted to see drawings of you?

…that was even weirder.

Right when Jian Rong was on the verge of going into self-seclusion on the spot, Lu Boyuan asked quietly, "Are you logged into your main account or side account on Weibo?"

Jian Rong's other hand clenched extremely tight. "Side account."

If he followed this kind of thing on his main account, most likely neither Ding-*ge* nor the water friends would let him get away with it.

Lu Boyuan let out an "en." "Are the drawings good."

"……" Jian Rong's scalp prickled, and he admitted stiffly, "They are."

Ding-*ge* wrapped up his discussion with the other coaches and nodded. “Alright, that’s the gist of it. Let’s review the match with them now so they can go rest afterwards.”

Lu Boyuan just happened to reach the end of the pictures. He tapped on the screen and the pictures automatically closed, returning to Jian Rong’s chat with the animal hospital.

Jian Rong was still thinking about how to explain that Weibo.

“He grows faster than you do.”

Jian Rong was startled. “Who?”

“Little Orange.” Lu Boyuan placed the phone back in Jian Rong’s hand, and his fingertips brushed briefly against Jian Rong’s palm.

—

The next afternoon, TTC arrived punctually at the competition arena.

Theirs was the second match of the night, so they came according to the predetermined time. But the match of the two teams playing before them was going a little slowly, and their third round had only just begun by the time TTC got there.

Yuan Qian checked the time. “It’s probably gonna be around ten by the time we finish.”

“It won’t.” Pine said, “We’re going to finish this in two rounds, a blitzkrieg.”

“That’d be for the best.” Yuan Qian chuckled and looked at the live broadcast on the TV before he suddenly jolted up. “Wait a minute, I’m not seeing things, right… a female pro player is on stage for MFG today?!”

“You just noticed?” Ding-*ge*’s head was lowered as he took notes. “Kongkong wasn’t doing too well in the last few matches, so MFG’s coach let her play instead. This should be her first time competing professionally.”

Jian Rong unconsciously glanced at the bottom right corner of the broadcast.

The girl’s hair was tied up in a neat and efficient ponytail, and she looked like the pretty daughter of a modest family. She was currently controlling Orianna in the game.

Xiao Bai had mentioned this female pro player to him before; he said that she had almost joined TTC’s trainee team.

Yuan Qian nodded. “Not a bad move for MFG’s coach. Regardless if MFG wins or loses today, they’ll definitely have a spot carved out for them on the hot search tonight. Female pro players, a rare existence ah.”

“*Ai*, this rare existence was originally supposed to be our team’s. Unfortunately, this girl especially worships my *ge*, and Ding-*ge* was worried that it would affect my *ge*’s training if she joined the team, so he gave her a hard rejection.” Xiao Bai paused. “Who would’ve thought that we would end up recruiting someone who worships my *ge* even more.”

Lu Boyuan was watching the match absent-mindedly. When he heard that, he laughed.

Jian Rong silently chanted "*beating someone up is a competition ban*" to himself a few times, before he picked up a cushion and threw it over.

"It wasn't only because of that." Ding-*ge* explained, "At the time, I was in contact with Savior, so I gave her a heads-up in advance and told her that it wasn't guaranteed she would be able to join the first team after becoming a trainee. In fact, it would even be difficult to enter the second team, and she would have to endure. She seemed to need money quite badly, so she considered it for a few days before she decided not to come and try out."

On the screen, Orianna flashed and used her ult, immediately pulling in three people on the other team and winning the team fight despite having fewer people on her side.

"Beautiful!" Yuan Qian said, "Hey, she's pretty good? But how come I don't have any impression of her ID… I feel like I haven't seen it when playing ranked before."

Jian Rong leaned back against the sofa and said, "She changed her name. Before, her ID was a string of random letters."

"Random letters… oh, did it start with a J?" Yuan Qian paused briefly. "You know her?"

As soon as Yuan Qian said that, he felt like he had asked a useless question.

Someone who specialized in a certain role would certainly recognize other excellent players who chose the same role. This girl was at a level where she could play professionally, so it wouldn't be unusual if Jian Rong did know her.

Sure enough, Jian Rong let out a low “en,” with one leg hiked over the other and both hands folded over his stomach.

His reply didn’t sound particularly energetic. Lu Boyuan turned his head and glanced at him. He was about to ask something when someone knocked on their break room door.

The moment Tang Qin walked in, the smell of perfume filled the entire room.

She was the host today, and her makeup was applied exquisitely and gracefully. There was a paper bag in her hand, and she asked, “I didn’t disturb you guys, did I?”

“Nope.” Xiao Bai raised his eyes and questioned, “What’s up, Tang Qin-*jie*? Need something?”

“No.” Tang Qin smiled. “I asked a friend to buy some coffee beans from overseas and bring them back for me. I remembered that you all like to drink coffee, so I brought some over.”

The break room went quiet for two seconds. Apart from Jian Rong, everyone else subconsciously shot a glance at Lu Boyuan.

None of them liked to drink that stuff. However, in an interview a few years back, Lu Boyuan had mentioned that he was fond of drinking coffee.

Jian Rong’s eyes were still fixed on the broadcast.

His lips were pressed tightly together, and he was completely motionless. He thought that he was acting very naturally, but in reality, his expression was frighteningly dark.

Why was his stomach so hungry.

Why was his forehead always sweating.

Why did so many people like Lu Boyuan.

When that thought flitted past, Jian Rong was slightly stunned, and he increased his hands' pressure on his stomach a little more.

The more fans a professional gamer had, the higher their net worth would be. The concept was a bit similar to that of professional soccer players.

There was once a soccer player that Jian Rong had worshipped a lot. When he saw that soccer player begin to gain more and more fans, he had felt a faint sense of happiness.

If Lu Boyuan had many fans, Jian Rong should also feel happy about it.

But he didn't—not only that, he even felt uncomfortable, resentful, annoyed.

Was it because he was too hungry?

As Jian Rong thought that, he picked up the bottled water on the table and took a huge gulp from it.

“No need, we can’t even finish what we have in the base right now.” Lu Boyuan swept a look at the person next to him. “Drink a little slower.”

Jian Rong lifted a hand and wiped his mouth. “…mn.”

Once Lu Boyuan declined, the others didn’t dare to accept of their own accord either. Tang Qin left the way she came in, and in order to lessen the awkwardness, she asked for a signature from Xiao Bai before departing.

MFG swiftly won their third game. With a score of 8/3/7, the female pro player became the match’s MVP.

Several minutes later, the broadcast switched over to the interview. Simultaneously, a staff member came to knock on their door, indicating that they should get ready to go on stage.

After putting his phone on silent, Lu Boyuan tossed it to the side and looked over to see the person next to him stand up a bit slower than usual. Jian Rong stood in place for a few seconds before he started to head out of the room.

Lu Boyuan’s brows furrowed slightly, and he quickly caught up to him.

They only walked for a short distance before they encountered PUD, who was waiting at the back entrance.

“We have to wait for two minutes, the staff members are still inspecting the computers,” XIU said cheerily upon seeing them.

“Alrighty.” Yuan Qian remembered something and said, “Happy birthday ah, Xiu[1]–*ge*.”

“At least you have a conscience.” XIU smiled. “I know a brother who still hasn’t given me my birthday blessings, even till now.”

Lu Boyuan said, “I’ll give them after we win the match, it’s all the same.”

Xiao Bai instantly provoked, “Our consecutive wins will be our birthday gift to you, Xiu-*ge*.”

“Will not lose.” Savior looked at Jian Rong and said, “You guys lose.”

Jian Rong rolled his eyes and ignored him.

The starving sensation in his stomach was growing stronger and stronger. Jian Rong licked his lips and couldn’t help but tilt his shoulders so that he could lean against the nearby wall.

Just as he was beginning to feel a little more relaxed, someone suddenly tugged gently at the back of his jacket collar.

Jian Rong subconsciously straightened up and glanced behind him.

Lu Boyuan looked at Jian Rong’s hand, which was shifting around on top of his belly. “Your stomach hurts?”

Jian Rong denied, “It doesn’t.”

Lu Boyuan watched him calmly for a few seconds. “If your stomach hurts, then let the substitute play.”

“No.” Jian Rong blurted out his refusal. He hesitated for a moment before he still ended up admitting truthfully, “I’m just… hungry.”

“I’m also hungry.” Xiao Bai rubbed his own belly. “How about we go and eat hot pot after this? We can order beef, tripe, duck intestines…”

Lu Boyuan continued to look at Jian Rong.

It was normal for Xiao Bai to be hungry; that guy clamored about being hungry every time before a match.

Jian Rong’s face was somewhat pale, and there was sweat on his forehead.

Lu Boyuan thought back. “Did you eat breakfast?”

“No.” After Jian Rong said that, he immediately explained, “In our previous matches, I also never ate anything the entire day beforehand, and I was always fine…”

Lu Boyuan stopped listening to him. He turned around and said something quietly to Ding-*ge*, who looked briefly taken aback before he rapidly walked towards the break room.

Not long after, Ding-*ge* came back holding a brightly colored package containing rainbow-colored hard candy inside.

“Eat one.” Lu Boyuan said lowly, “Jian Rong, your blood sugar is a bit low.”

Jian Rong was startled.

No wonder he kept feeling so listless.

Jian Rong took the candies. “My fault. This sort of situation has never happened to me before, I’ll be more careful next time.”

He tried to tear open the package, but he missed and didn’t create an opening.

The staff came over to hurry them onto the stage. Jian Rong switched to a different side of the bag, wanting to try again, but someone took the package away from him.

Seeing Lu Boyuan decisively tear open the package, Jian Rong extended his hand, wanting to take it back. “Than…”

Lu Boyuan didn’t give it to him. “Open your mouth.”

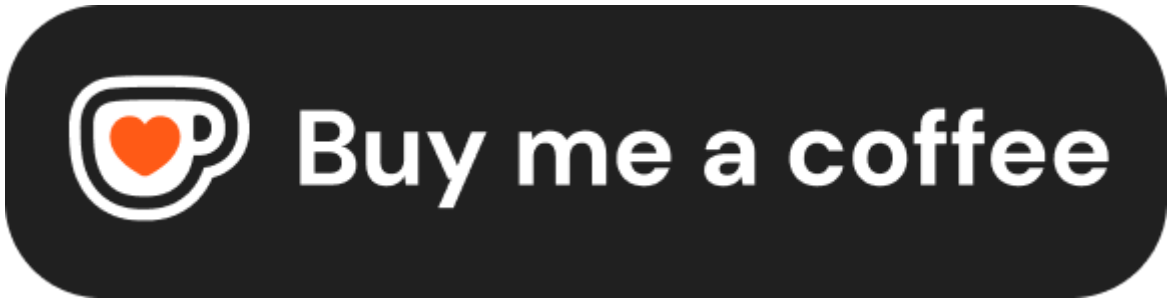
Jian Rong unconsciously obeyed and opened his mouth.

Right in front of their teammates, PUD, Tang Qin, and numerous staff members, Lu Boyuan took out a red-colored candy and fed it to Jian Rong.

In a place where the others couldn’t see, Lu Boyuan’s fingers bumped very lightly against the tip of Jian Rong’s tongue.

Translation Notes

1. *In case you’re wondering why it’s not capitalized, it’s because XIU finally gets a Chinese character instead of just all english ‘XIU’ haha* ^



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ICDI Chapter 75: TTCvsPUD

The warmth of Lu Boyuan's fingertips, bundled in the taste of strawberries, seeped through Jian Rong's mind. He stayed frozen with his mouth hanging open, making him look a bit foolish.

For a split second, the bustling backstage area suddenly went quiet.

Seeing no reaction, Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and asked, "Don't like the flavor?"

His heart thumping wildly in his throat, Jian Rong pushed the hard candy over to the right side of his mouth and replied indistinctly, "Like it."

Everyone snapped out of it.

The staff member who came to get them let out an "er" sound before repeating, "The computer inspection is finished. If you're ready, you can head on stage at any time. The match will start in approximately ten minutes."

"Fuck, isn't that way too freaking obvious…" XIU muttered out loud to himself, blinking rapidly several times in a row.

Savior gazed at that package in Lu Boyuan's hand, his eyes burning. "I want, also eat candy."

"I'll buy some for you after we're done with the match." XIU patted Savior's head. "Stop watching them, you're gonna end up being corrupted."

Savior: “?”

Why would he be corrupted?

Couldn’t quite understand.

PUD’s core top laner, 98k, retracted his gaze. Despite being a Korean import player, he spoke Chinese completely fluently, and he said, “We’re going on stage now, play well. If we win, we can have a happy belated birthday celebration for you tomorrow.”

XIU gave a huff of laughter and followed after him. “And if we lose?”

98k: “We’ll have an unhappy birthday celebration.”

XIU: “…”

After Lu Boyuan did that, never mind the bystanders, even TTC’s members were startled for a moment.

Xiao Bai glanced at the nearby camera before realization dawned on him and he instantly tugged at the hem of Pine’s jacket. “P-baby! Quick! You feed me one too!”

Pine said disdainfully, “No.”

Ding-*ge* looked suspiciously at Lu Boyuan.

He had already felt like something was off before. Now that Lu Boyuan had fed Jian Rong, it could be considered a knock on his head.

Ding-*ge* said, “You…”

“Don’t rub your hand against the wall next time.” Lu Boyuan swept a look at Jian Rong’s hand. “Wipe it off, it’s time to go on stage.”

Jian Rong blinked and lifted his hand. Only then did he realize that the fingertips of his right hand were coated with a layer of dust from the wall.

Jian Rong carelessly wiped his hand against his pants, immediately leaving behind a streak of white on the black fabric.

The commentators warmed up the match for quite a while before the two teams finally took their seats.

“They’re coming, they’re coming, they’re finally here.” Commentator A rubbed his hands. “I’m sure that the fans have all been waiting a very long time for this match, right?”

Commentator B: “Forget the fans, I’ve also waited a very long time for this. However, the last match was unexpectedly brilliant, I’m already starting to look forward to the LPL’s only female pro player at the moment and her next match.”

“Indeed.” The camera panned over to the audience, and Commentator A burst out laughing. “Speaking of which… what’s going on with all the LED signs tonight?”

The fans present at the stadium tonight were split fifty-fifty between the two teams, and both sides possessed about the same amount of LED signs. Some of the fans were also using their phone screens to display scrolling text.

PUD's fan support included—

[With the sound of a gunshot, 98k strikes Qian's heart.]

[Savior darling an eternal god]

[Savior killed Soft]

[You can always fall back on XIU]

[Congrats TTC for receiving their first defeat of the regular season!]

Everyone in the audience was the type to shade others in game, so PUD's LED signs were all filled with provocativity.

But TTC's fans evidently weren't in the mood to fight back tonight—

[Pure passerby here, did TTC's mid laner and jungler really sleep together?]

[TTC's bot lane is not clean]

[Soft and Road, covered with a blanket, simply chatting]

[Road stop killing stop killing]

[Concentrate on the competition don't date @TTC all members]

[Qian-*ge* run for it!]

Xiao Bai appeared to be checking his peripherals, but his gaze kept floating over to the audience as he narrated aloud, "A staff member went over… and took down the '*did TTC's mid laner and jungler really sleep together*' sign, Jian Rong now you're short a support banner!"

Jian Rong: "…don't talk to me."

Yuan Qian sighed. "Who would've thought, in my lifetime… someone on our team would actually have low blood sugar."

Ding-*ge* frowned. "I also can't figure it out. Every day, I feed you guys with delicious food, good drinks, and generous amounts of meat…"

Pine said indifferently, "Even if you prepared it in advance, there's no point. He doesn't eat it."

Xiao Bai seized the opportunity to snitch. "Exactly. Apart from that one time my *ge* ordered dim sum for everyone, he barely ever eats breakfast before a match."

Everyone else chatted cheerfully with each other, but only Lu Boyuan remained silent.

Jian Rong clenched his teeth and thought to himself, *How come the match still isn't starting yet*.

After the players sat down on stage, they were forbidden from looking to their left or right, so Jian Rong couldn't see Lu Boyuan's expression.

Commentator A said, "Okay, the camera is starting to give close-ups to the players now, which means our match is about to begin… 98k's killing intent seems to be quite high today ah. Savior's hairstyle is too cute. XIU looks as relaxed as ever, it's unclear how XIU's hand injury is faring."

“His injury must be recovering quite well, or else he wouldn’t be playing… hey, are we allowed to talk about this?” Commentator B chuckled. “Next up are TTC’s members. *Ss*—how come Qian-*ge* gives off an inexplicably lonely impression today…”

“Stop stop stop! That’s what you really aren’t allowed to talk about, okay!” Commentator A said, “As always, God Lu is very handsome—except he doesn’t seem to be in a very good mood?”

“…that does seem to be the case.” The camera turned, and Commentator B said, puzzled, “Soft also looks quite unenergetic… what’s up with TTC? They have to get serious ah.”

In his head, Lu Boyuan estimated the time left before the match was set to start. He asked evenly, “Do you still feel uncomfortable.”

“I can play.” Jian Rong answered extremely quickly, before he added, “It won’t affect my gameplay.”

Right as he said that, the game entered the pick/ban phase.

PUD was the blue side, and they unhesitatingly banned Lee Sin.

Commentator A: “A routine procedure. Regardless of whether this champion is strong or weak in the current meta, anyone playing against TTC has no choice but to ban Lee Sin right off the bat.”

Commentator B sighed regretfully. “*Ai*, speaking of which, it’s been a long time since we’ve seen God Lu’s Lee Sin. I miss it quite a bit.”

Commentator A gave an obliging laugh. “In that case, you can go to Soft’s stream and try your luck there.”

At that moment, Jian Rong couldn’t hear anything apart from his teammates’ voices and the game’s sound effects, so he didn’t know that the commentators had swept him up into their rhythm.

He glanced at the opposing team’s ban list, and a bit of unhappiness appeared in his eyes.

PUD gave their first three ban spots to Lee Sin, Varus, and Yuumi.

They didn’t ban a single mid lane champion.

So when Ding-*ge* asked if they wanted to ban Savior’s Orianna, Jian Rong coldly refused. “No need. No matter what he picks, I can beat him.”

Jian Rong was still sucking on the candy. As a result, even though he was clearly laying down a threat, he sounded somewhat comical since his pronunciation was unclear.

Lu Boyuan shifted his mouse as his expression cleared up a little.

“Then how about we ban either Renekton or Camille.” Yuan Qian instantly said, “I’ll lay my cards on the table first: I’m no match for 98k in the top lane.”

98k was PUD’s top laner, as well as the first Korean player to join the LPL. Prior to that, he belonged to the LCK’s top ranked team.

Back then, when the news about his transfer broke out, it wouldn't be excessive at all to describe the situation as "bloody carnage." PUD and 98k himself were both utterly and completely flamed. However, 98k's mentality was very strong, and he stubbornly stayed in PUD all the way until now; currently, he was the LPL's most popular top laner.

The pick/ban phase ended, and Jian Rong chose Syndra, who possessed both CC and damage.

Xiao Bai and Pine held a brief discussion. 98k was a powerhouse in the top lane, whereas it wasn't clear yet who would win in the mid lane between Jian Rong and Savior, meaning their bot lane would become extremely crucial. As a result, after they talked it over, they decided to go with a team composition that was stronger in the early game—Lux and Caitlyn.

Ding-*ge* felt like they could deal enough damage with their current team composition, so he told Lu Boyuan to lock in Jarvan IV, who could be used to engage in team fights.

Meanwhile, Yuan Qian chose the steady and dependable errand boy, Ornn.

Two minutes later, the game officially began.

Jian Rong's playstyle was as intense as usual. Even before he hit level 6, he started looking for opportunities, continuously whittling down Savior's health. But Savior played his Aurelion Sol extremely cautiously, focusing solely on the minions in front of him. If he was low on health, he would retreat back to his tower to wait for the wave, not in any rush whatsoever.

Lu Boyuan's early game objective was very clear—thoroughly gank 98k.

XIU's objective was similarly clear: protect 98k to death.

Conflicts constantly popped up between both teams' top laners and junglers. They clashed twice, but nobody died.

The third time, Lu Boyuan said calmly, "Even if XIU counterganks this time, keep fighting. We can beat him."

Yuan Qian immediately responded, "OK."

Lu Boyuan calculated it correctly. With a precise EQR combo, he restrained 98k's Volibear. Although XIU appeared at the back end of their field of vision, it was obvious that he wouldn't be able to make it in time to save 98k.

At that moment, a blue-colored ice arrow slowly flew over from the bot lane—and accurately pierced through Yuan Qian.

It belonged to the ult of the opposing ADC's Ashe, and it was able to both deal damage and stun an enemy for 3.5 seconds.

Commentator A said straightaway, "What a beautiful ult! Qian-*ge* has been stunned and can't move, so they don't have enough damage to kill 98k. XIU makes it just in time, and God Lu has no choice but to retreat, since he doesn't have enough health… 98k has successfully escaped!"

Commentator B: "The top lane is so lively, God Lu has already gone up there three times now. How come he doesn't try ganking the mid lane?"

“Savior’s almost combined himself with the tower, how to gank that? Of course, there’s also another possibility…” Commentator A coughed lightly. “Avoid arousing suspicion. You understand, right?”

Commentator B laughed in spite of himself. “You really aren’t afraid of being assassinated by Soft, huh.”

The barrage in the stream’s live broadcast was extremely energetic—

[@Commentator A, the moment he started speaking I knew he was an old water friend.]

[Just wait, this commentator will undoubtedly make it onto the dumbass’ grudge book.]

[Grudge book? Isn’t that too excessive?? It’s normal for Road not to go to the mid lane, Savior is famous for being stable in the early game. Last time, four people in Fighting Tiger surrounded the mid lane and still couldn’t kill him…]

[That’s true. Not like my dumbass son, who’s constantly tower diving but can’t beat up four enemies as long as they press down on his head[1] ^ ^]

[It is exactly that excessive. Back when LoL’s blocking system wasn’t refined yet, this bluenette dumbass had a genuine grudge book. If he encountered an actor listed in his book, he would instantly start interacting with them the moment he entered the game.]

[The most infuriating thing was how quite a few times after he finished insulting them, he could still carry the game all by himself and win even

with the actor on his team. I fucking died laughing.]

…

Taking advantage of the fact that the enemy ADC didn't have his ult, Pine and Xiao Bai promptly forcefully pushed a wave.

Jian Rong reported lowly, "Enemy mid laner is missing, low health."

"How low is low health?" Xiao Bai asked.

Jian Rong replied swiftly, "Less than 300."

With that little health, it was very unlikely that he was headed down to gank the bot lane.

Xiao Bai: "Granddad's going for it."

Xiao Bai flashed and rushed forward to toss out his Q, which landed squarely on the enemy support's Tahm Kench. Tahm Kench wasn't able to react in time and ended up being rooted in place; Pine immediately followed up with a trap, triggering a headshot.

Right as they were about to finish off Tahm Kench, a blue glowing object flew towards them—it was the opposing team's Aurelion Sol, with 299 HP.

Savior played his Aurelion Sol to its absolute limit. Just as Jian Rong reached the drake pit, he heard someone speak in their team voice chat.

Xiao Bai: "Granddad's gone."

The first blood announcement sounded. Savior killed Xiao Bai, and Pine withdrew back under the tower with minimal health.

At once, Jian Rong used his flash, wanting to trade Savior, but Savior quickly followed up with his own flash. With a shake of his tail, he vanished.

Jian Rong questioned, “He came down with 300 HP, and you two couldn’t even force out a flash from him?”

Xiao Bai: “Well, what could I have done about that? I only had enough mana for one Q. This Savior’s positioning seems to be even more amazing than yours…”

Jian Rong’s expression was chilly. “Say that one more time??”

“You’re the most amazing.” Lu Boyuan placed a ward near Jian Rong’s mid lane and instructed levelly, “Savior is going to try harder to gank the bot lane now. Suppress him in the lane, don’t let him get too relaxed. Qian-*ge* hang in there, I’ll head up once I help the bot lane gain an advantage.”

Intentionally or not, Jian Rong’s fur was stroked back down. He blinked a few times, pretending to be calm as he swallowed back his ridicule.

Lu Boyuan’s prediction was very accurate. In the next ten minutes, Savior flew towards the bot lane over and over, bringing XIU along with him too.

Lu Boyuan and Jian Rong also rushed over quickly. They exchanged blows back and forth for two waves, yet not a single person lost their life.

At that moment, Yuan Qian was solo killed by Volibear in the top lane.

“98k has been hiding this Volibear for the entire freaking season!” Yuan Qian was suppressed for ten whole minutes, and he couldn’t help but clench his teeth. “And he even tower dove to kill me… Captain, don’t bother coming up here. You might not be able to gank him, and if you’re counterganked, it’s a sure death. I’ll make do somehow… just treat this game as if I’m not here.”

“Mn.” Lu Boyuan said, “It’s fine.”

Two minutes later, Xiao Bai and Pine entered their lane, but Pine only got to hit a minion once before Aurelion Sol once again flew into their line of sight, swinging his butt.

“He’s fucking here again!!” Xiao Bai said angrily, “Does heaven’s law even exist anymore? Where’s our darling mid laner?”

The “darling mid laner” frowned. “He has twenty less minions than I do, and he went straight over from his base. Clearly, he wants to restrict Pine’s farming even at the cost of giving up his own minions. What can I do about that?”

Xiao Bai: “You come gank too ah.”

“Have I not gone?” Jian Rong cleared the wave of minions. “The number of times I went to the bot lane in this one game alone is higher than the total amount of times I go to the bot lane in a whole month of ranked games…”

Xiao Bai: “Shut your mouth!”

Jian Rong: “?”

“I’m going to say a number right now, and you’re going to get on board instantly!” Xiao Bai fled under the tower, his mouth running at lightning speed. “Within one minute…… come to the bot lane 8,133 times[2]!”

Jian Rong: “…”

There was an outburst of laughter in the team voice chat.

Jian Rong truly couldn’t hold back any longer. Enduring the discomfort in his stomach, his lips twitched into a smile as he said, “…dumbass.”

The chaotic melee in the bot lane came to an end after they pushed PUD’s first tower; Jian Rong and the rest had an edge over the opposing team most of the time.

However, by the time the first turret was destroyed in the enemy’s bot lane, 98k’s score was already 3/0/0—it was a super fat bear.

TTC’s damage output was focused on the mid and bot lanes this round, but Jian Rong’s farming could only be considered average. After all, he didn’t have a single kill or assist to his name. Meanwhile, Pine’s farming had also been utterly restrained by Savior.

As a result, thirty-two minutes in, when Volibear came down to team fight, Xiao Bai felt just like a huge mountain was bearing down on him.

Even though Lu Boyuan and Pine had worked together to kill off the enemy ADC at the first possible moment, the moment Volibear entered the fight, they realized that oneshotting the ADC… wasn’t any fucking help at all!

At the end of the team fight, Jian Rong gritted his teeth and forcibly traded Savior's Aurelion Sol, while he himself was directly swatted to death by Volibear. Taking out two of PUD's players at the cost of five of their own, TTC lost this team fight.

Forty minutes into the game, Volibear powerfully flashed in and engaged, unreasonably able to slap people around even with his eyes closed. After he killed Pine, PUD immediately chose to go for Baron.

At forty-four minutes, PUD swiftly regrouped and pushed mid. Jian Rong flashed and oneshotted the enemy ADC, seizing a small chance for them to catch their breaths. However, TTC's total gold was still less than PUD's.

At forty-eight minutes, Savior cooperated with XIU to kill Xiao Bai, who was acting as vision. They continued to advance down the mid lane, leaving Lu Boyuan with no alternative but to flash in and engage. Right as he instakilled Aurelion Sol, Volibear also flashed and killed off Jian Rong.

At forty-eight minutes and forty seconds, TTC's Nexus was destroyed, and PUD won the first round of the match.

Jian Rong removed his headphones as the cheers of the PUD fans resounded through the stadium.

Jian Rong stood up while reflecting back on his shortcomings in this game. Maybe it was because he got up too suddenly, but for a split second, he felt his mind go blank when he straightened up.

Almost imperceptibly, Jian Rong swayed a little, and Lu Boyuan rapidly steadied him with a hand on his shoulder.

This scene was captured by the big screen. TTC's fans were startled for a moment, before they instantly exploded with a series of odd screams.

PUD fans: "?"

Were you the ones who won the game, or were we?

Jian Rong stood up straight and promptly clarified, "I'm fine, I just got up too suddenly."

Lu Boyuan didn't say anything. He only quietly waited for two seconds to make sure that Jian Rong had recovered before finally releasing him.

Back at the break room, Yuan Qian was the first to speak. "It's my fault, I was careless during that one wave and didn't expect that he would dare to tower dive and kill me. I should've gone straight back to base instead."

"You're not to blame, 98k plays Volibear extremely well, too meticulously. I didn't think that he would take out that champion here during the regular season." Ding-*ge* lowered his eyes. "It's alright, we'll ban Volibear right away in the next game."

Xiao Bai raised his hand. "Can we ban Aurelion Sol? I'm about to go into self-seclusion from being ganked."

As soon as he finished saying that, he immediately received a death glare from their team's mid laner.

"I'll play Twisted Fate next game." Jian Rong sat on a stool next to the TV, chewing on the crackers that Ding-*ge* had just handed him. With a dark

expression, he said, “I’ll take him on in terms of providing support.”

Lu Boyuan was sitting on the sofa, his attention focused solely on Jian Rong.

Jian Rong hid it very well. If it wasn’t for his stagger earlier, Lu Boyuan wouldn’t even be able to tell that something was wrong.

Just as Lu Boyuan was hesitating over whether they should switch in the substitute or not, the staff member knocked on the door and informed them that it was time to go on stage.

“Okay, let’s go.” Ding-*ge* stood up and handed that bag of candy from before to Jian Rong. “Eat one more piece.”

Jian Rong took the bag and let out an “oh.”

There were numerous different flavors of candy in the bag. Jian Rong searched through them and found the same strawberry-flavored candy as before. He peeled off the wrapper and tossed it into his mouth.

Lu Boyuan retracted his gaze. From his peripheral vision, he could clearly sense that after Jian Rong tied the bag of candy shut again, he shot a stealthy look in Lu Boyuan’s direction.

The players entered the stage again, and the next round of the match started quite soon after.

The commentators were still immersed in Volibear’s regime from the last game.

Commentator A: “This Volibear really is something else. Also, the other thing is that PUD’s ability to group together is too strong, and their cooperation is good as well. It feels like TTC’s mid and bot lanes still need to improve on their teamwork. There’s no way to win a competition relying only on your individual strength ah, Soft.”

Commentator B couldn’t help but laugh. “How do you know that it’s Soft’s fault? What if Soft reported an MIA, but the bot lane wasn’t willing to leave?”

“Er, that’s not impossible either.” Commentator A glanced at the screen. “Alright, currently the first six banned champions have been announced. As expected, Volibear has been banned. We most likely won’t be able to see this champion appear on PUD’s team for a very long time after this, just like Road’s Lee Sin… hm??”

Commentator A was stunned, and he leaned forward a little, repeatedly scanning over PUD’s ban list. “Wait a moment—I’m not seeing things, am I?”

PUD’s first three banned champions were Graves, LeBlanc, and Varus.

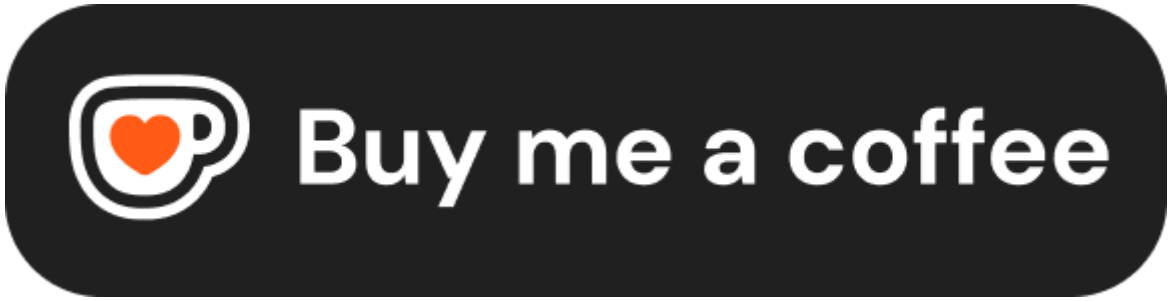
“You aren’t.”

Amidst the screams of the entire audience, Commentator B paused briefly before he gave a deep sigh. “After an entire summer season and half a spring season… the champion Lee Sin has finally been released from the ban list during a match that Road is in.”

Translation Notes

1. *I think this is just implying Jian Rong's short so he can't reach him if they push him away by his head* ^
2. *Alrighty, another Chinese meme lol. Source is a douyin video making fun of streamers who trick viewers into buying products through various methods – Xiao Bai quotes some of the lines here* ^

Yan: In case you're curious how P&B works – each team bans three champions and then picks three in phase 1; the remaining 2 pick/bans happen in phase 2 (after phase 1 is over). Therefore, if they don't ban Lee Sin in phase 1, that means Road is able to pick it. (I think this is how it works anyway – please correct me if I'm wrong!)



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ICDI Chapter 76: TTCvsPUD

PUD's ADC laughed and said in their team voice chat, "I can hear the audience's screams even through my headphones."

"No kidding, even I want to shout." XIU scoffed good-naturedly, "The hell, it's my birthday today, do we really have to free his Lee Sin so he can come screw me?"

Savior said, "Coach said, practice team comp."

"He's not that godly." PUD's coach was Korean, and he was currently pacing around behind them. "Over on our side, everyone knows how to play this champion, and some aren't worse than Road. During the World Championships, I can't possibly ban Lee Sin every single match, we have to try and overcome it. What's more, it doesn't matter if we lose either."

Aside from the fact that this was only a regular season match, they had also already accumulated enough points to solidly enter the playoffs.

Even if they really did end up losing this round, the match was a BO3 setup, so they would still have an opportunity in the next game.

The two commentators were still in a state of shock.

Meanwhile, the barrage had been spamming for a long time—

[Free win, congrats TTC]

[Congrats TTC]

[Congrats TTC]

[They only let out a Lee Sin, that's all, it's not that big of a deal. You all make it seem like TTC's win is set in stone with Lee Sin.]

[Fun fact: in last year's spring season and the summer season before that, Road's Lee Sin had a 100% win rate.]

[Actually, that champion's been heavily banned for a while now. If you add it up, he's only played Lee Sin five or six times…]

[Fans, stop hyping him up, or else how embarrassing is it gonna be for you if he loses.]

[Won't say anything else, congrats TTC]

Yuan Qian was the first to pick his champion in this round. When he saw the ban list, he was startled. "What is PUD doing?"

Xiao Bai furiously added fuel to the fire. "I'm saying it like it is: freeing Lee Sin is equivalent to looking down on my *ge*."

For once, Jian Rong agreed with Xiao Bai.

As another coach, Ding-*ge* could tell what the other side was thinking right away, and he laughed in spite of himself. "Are they treating this regular season match as a practice match?"

Pine said, "In any case, they're guaranteed to enter the playoffs, so they'll play however they want."

“Then what do we do?” Yuan Qian was at a loss. “Should we still take Lee Sin? What if they have some new strategy that targets Captain…”

Ding-*ge* shot Lu Boyuan a look. “Ask him.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Take it.”

His expression was indifferent, and he didn’t actually seem all that happy about his signature champion being freed. As he adjusted his runes, he said, “Just for fun.”

Yuan Qian instantly locked in Lee Sin.

After that, it was as if it didn’t matter at all what champions the other players picked anymore. The commentators continued to emphasize and revolve around Lu Boyuan’s Lee Sin.

Until PUD’s entire team composition was revealed.

Commentator A said, “PUD chose Kha’Zix jungle, Azir mid, and Alistar support… logically speaking, these three champions are quite effective at restraining Lee Sin.”

“That’s true. Alistar’s knockup and Azir’s ult can both block Lee Sin’s dash. Kha’Zix is also relatively agile and can easily avoid attacks.” Commentator B paused. “But as for whether or not they’ll be able to restrain Lee Sin, we’ll only know after the game begins.”

The game officially started.

Lu Boyuan walked out of the base, wearing his own championship skin.

The broadcast director was very competent, and he repeatedly switched the viewpoint back over to Lee Sin.

Right off the bat, Commentator A said, “The way God Lu aggroed this monster is top-tier, his micro-movements are incredible… learn from him, everyone should learn from him.”

Commentator B nodded approvingly. “Even the way he walks seems to be somewhat different from other Lee Sins.”

The commentators could praise anything.

The players’ POV was available to watch on the broadcast. During each game, only one player’s screen from each team would be selected for the audience to watch.

In this round, TTC’s POV was naturally given to Road.

The moment the game began, the number of people in the POV stream frantically exploded—

[It’s been ten years! Road’s Lee Sin TAT!!]

[Don’t be so dramatic, he just played Lee Sin last time he duo Q’d with Soft]

[Can Soft’s fans not stick to my husband all the time?!]

[Like you have the final say in whether we stick to him or not? Who do you think you are? Your husband went to check on my son’s room at two AM in the middle of the night, do you know about that??]

[Well, I'm not like that, I've even started shipping my husband and Soft together.]

[Wait a second, hasn't anyone else realized that there's something – wrong, with God Lu's viewpoint…]

[Hahahahahaha God Lu why do you keep looking at the mid lane??]

[When I came in here, I almost thought that I was watching Soft's POV.]

A great deal of players all believed that jungler was the hardest role to play, because not only did this role require good mechanics, it also required a certain amount of awareness.

The jungler had to predict what monsters the enemy jungler was killing and which lane would be ganked in the next wave, so that they could lie in wait at that lane ahead of time and counterattack. Junglers also needed to constantly pay attention to what was going on in their teammates' lanes in order to provide assistance and gank at a moment's notice.

Lu Boyuan's camera switched once again to the mid lane, just in time to spot Jian Rong trade a few blows back and forth with Savior, successfully consuming a bit of Savior's health. After gaining the advantage, Jian Rong didn't forget to proficiently flash TTC's team logo.

[Twenty seconds earlier, Soft's dancing, twenty seconds later, Soft's flashing his logo]

[If this dumbass isn't acting like a prick, then he's on his way to acting like a prick…]

[It’s basically at the point where Road glances at the other lanes once while checking on Soft eight times.]

[Poor XIU, the Rift Scuttler that he painstakingly fought for quite a while was taken away by a single Q from God Lu…]

It was true that Lu Boyuan kept checking on the mid lane.

In the last game, he was always either at the top or bot lane. This time around, no matter what, he had to pay some attention to their mid laner.

XIU’s Rift Scuttler was stolen, and he turned around, wanting to give chase. But after he ate Lee Sin’s Q, he calculated Lu Boyuan’s current damage before deciding not to pursue him in the end.

Yet at that moment, Lee Sin abruptly stopped, and then flashed their team logo at him.

XIU: “…”

Heavens, they were all getting corrupted by Soft.

At level 7, when Lu Boyuan saw XIU appear at the bot lane, he circled around to the bush behind Savior. “Jian Rong, get ready to pick a card.”

Jian Rong was playing Twisted Fate, which had a skill that allowed him to cycle through three different colored cards. The blue card restored mana, the red card slowed enemies, and the yellow card stunned the target.

Jian Rong immediately said, “He’s got no flash, has his ult.”

Lu Boyuan said, “We can kill him.”

If Lu Boyuan said they could, then they could. Jian Rong promptly cooperated and pressed forward.

Savior was also on alert, and when he noticed that Jian Rong’s positioning was unusual, he quickly sought help from XIU in their voice chat before rapidly withdrawing back towards his tower.

Upon seeing Lee Sin appear next to him, he instantly used a movement skill to shift away. Unexpectedly, the second he landed on the ground, Lee Sin’s Q accurately smashed onto his body.

Savior’s action just then was a little rushed, which allowed Lu Boyuan to predict where he was going to move to.

Savior reacted very fast. When Lu Boyuan followed up with the second part of his Q, Savior directly tossed out his ult, interrupting Lu Boyuan midair and pushing him some distance back.

The commentators had long since noticed that Lu Boyuan wanted to tower dive and gank Savior. One commentator frowned and analyzed, “They can’t tower dive here, right? At level 7, two people going to dive Azir isn’t actually very rational… see, he was knocked back—”

Before the commentator could finish his sentence, he saw Lee Sin place a ward behind Savior the second before he was knocked back.

Lu Boyuan had already anticipated that he was going to be pushed away, and he immediately used his W skill to dash to the ward. He flashed,

rushing over to Savior, and used his roundhouse kick ult—propelling Savior over to Jian Rong.

Right away, Jian Rong cycled to the yellow card, a stun. With a Q plus Ignite, and then two auto attacks, he cleanly finished off Savior.

Lu Boyuan's entire chain of skills just now took less than two seconds to complete.

"This…" Commentator A said, "Wasn't that wave way too meticulous?? When did he place that ward? Did you see it?"

Commentator B shook his head. "I think I did, but I'm not too sure. Let's wait until they show the kill replay."

A minute and a half later, Lu Boyuan's ult went off cooldown, and he snuck into XIU's jungle straightaway, precisely camping XIU in the bushes next to the red buff.

XIU's health wasn't too great. Sensing danger, he wavered at the side for a moment and didn't go right for the buff.

Commentator A: "Actually, this is a bit risky. With how agile Kha'Zix is, it'll be very hard for Lee Sin to sweep him away if his Q misses…"

As he spoke, he saw Lu Boyuan emerge with a ward hop. XIU swiftly leaped and hid in Lu Boyuan's blind spot, evidently also wanting to dodge that Q before engaging with him.

Lu Boyuan didn't even blink. He fired his Q behind a wall that he had no vision of whatsoever, accurately landed the skill, and followed up with his second Q, dealing out the limits of his damage. With one final roundhouse kick ult, he knocked XIU back into Savior. As both of them flew into the air, he used his Q again and killed off XIU before ward hopping and escaping right in front of Savior's eyes.

Commentator A very naturally finished what he was saying earlier. "—of course, for God Lu, that's not a worry at all."

Commentator B: "…"

After completing that wave, Lu Boyuan recalled to base and bought more items as a kill announcement came from the bot lane.

Xiao Bai's Thresh directly flashed and followed up with an E and R, slowing and trapping the enemy ADC. Pine teleported over via Xiao Bai's lantern and instantly crushed the opposing team's ADC with his Aphelios.

"Nice!" Xiao Bai pinched his voice higher. "Song-*gege*[1] is super amazing, mwah mwah!"

Pine missed a minion, and his face immediately darkened. "You're not getting any more heals in this game."

With the bot lane at a major advantage, Lu Boyuan headed straight for the mid lane. He said to Jian Rong, "After we gank this wave, let's go to the top lane."

He spoke as if they had already sent Savior back to respawn at the base.

Jian Rong didn't even think about it. "Okay."

The other three people in the team went quiet for a second.

Most likely because Lu Boyuan had become significantly more low-key and restrained in the past few years, they had all forgotten that Lu Boyuan was also once a chuunibyou youth who would directly declare the enemy's death in the team voice chat.

Recently, due to the addition of their team's new mid laner, that sort of temperament seemed to be making a reappearance.

Savior was indeed very good at farming. Even though he had been ganked by Lu Boyuan once already, he still had more than a dozen minions under his belt compared to Jian Rong.

As a result, Lu Boyuan made a trip over again.

Savior was as cautious as ever. Unfortunately, the one he encountered was Lu Boyuan's Lee Sin.

Lu Boyuan's hand speed was too fast, and his mechanics were systematic and methodical. Savior was kicked over to Jian Rong yet again.

Lu Boyuan had a skill that was off cooldown, but he didn't use it. Instead, he gave the kill to Jian Rong.

"He keeps staying in front of me…" Savior clenched his teeth. "My flash is gone, XIU, can you come help me?"

The icon belonging to Twisted Fate's ult appeared over 98k's head. "Their mid laner is coming to gank me, I can run… I'm gone, Road is here too. XIU, go for the drake."

[Road's Lee Sin is so agile that *laozi* can't even tell how Savior died the last couple times…]

[This game is probably gonna become Road's Lee Sin's swan song, R.I.P]

[Thank you benefactor PUD for allowing me to witness Road's Lee Sin, thank you thank you!]

[Road keeps giving kills to the dumbass, shipping it~]

[There's nothing wrong with giving kills to the mid laner, don't fantasize. However I'm also shipping it, thank you thank you!]

PUD was at too great of a disadvantage. They were obviously trying to drag the game out to the late game, as they never actively engaged any team fights.

But it wasn't up to them whether or not they were going to team fight.

Twenty-six minutes in, Lu Boyuan circled around behind them. With a ward hop, flash, and roundhouse kick, he knocked back three of PUD's members before he directly killed off four of them, skyrocketing the game's rhythm.

Twenty-seven minutes in, TTC decisively went for Baron. PUD's only remaining survivor, XIU, crept around the bushes behind the pit, wanting to find a chance to steal Baron.

The instant Kha'Zix jumped down, Lu Boyuan's ult just happened to get off cooldown. He mercilessly kicked XIU out of the pit, and after taking care of Baron, he ward hopped and hit XIU with his Q, immediately finishing him off with a wave of damage.

Lu Boyuan recalled to base while standing atop XIU's corpse. Lee Sin poured a cup of tea into the championship trophy before he leisurely tilted his head back and took a sip.

[No way no way, there are still people who want to try stealing Baron from God Lu?!]

[Always gotta give a shot, you never know?]

[Hahahahaha it's like God Lu is wishing XIU a happy birthday]

[Everyone quick, go look at the match broadcast, XIU was so mad he started laughing hahahahahaha]

Thirty minutes into the game, TTC forcefully advanced. Originally, they were planning to end the game in one wave, but Savior stepped forward at a critical moment. Azir, whose creep score was quite impressive, jabbed twice and oneshotted Pine and Yuan Qian, who had slipped up in their positioning. After TTC pushed two inhibitors, they temporarily retreated.

Thirty-three minutes in, PUD's ADC was left on his own, and he was caught and killed by Yuan Qian. Once again, TTC pressed forward in PUD's mid lane.

PUD was already at a disadvantage, and after they lost their ADC, they basically didn't have any ability to counterattack; they had no choice but to try and guard their Nexus turrets. Xiao Bai flashed and hooked onto Savior, with Jian Rong's yellow card following close after. Lu Boyuan immediately ward hopped and kicked 98k—simultaneously launching Savior, who was standing at an angle behind 98k. The three CCs created an optimal amount of time for Pine to deal damage.

Twenty seconds later, Jian Rong dealt the finishing blow to PUD's Nexus.

TTC beautifully won the second round of the match, bringing the score to 1:1.

The players went off stage, and the commentators started analyzing the odds of victory or defeat in the third round.

Commentator A said, "Regardless of what PUD was thinking in the last game, there's no way they'll free Road's Lee Sin again. For the third game… I feel like PUD is probably a bit more likely to win."

Commentator B asked, "Are you suggesting that Road can't win unless he plays Lee Sin?!"

"Don't you put words in my mouth!" Commentator A scolded amiably. "God Lu's individual strength is excellent. Actually, none of TTC's current members are weak, but how to say this, it's obvious that TTC's teamwork as a whole isn't good enough—especially the teamwork between the mid laner and the rest of the lanes. Although PUD's mid laner is also a new member, Savior is fundamentally a team fight-type player. He thoroughly

understands what he should be doing at every moment, while Soft is clearly a bit weaker in this regard. For example, in the first game, Savior was always the one taking initiative to gank, whereas Soft only ran over to provide assistance afterwards. Like this, no matter how threatening you are on your own, you will rarely ever be able to effectively display your strength."

Instantly, Xiao Bai whipped his head around, wanting to see their mid laner get pissed. Instead, he was met with the sight of their mid laner sitting with his legs slightly spread apart and his elbows propped on top of his knees. Jian Rong wasn't even looking at the TV screen.

"Whatcha thinking about?" Xiao Bai felt like something was wrong, and he knocked gently against Jian Rong's shoulder. "How come you aren't saying anything?"

Sensing Lu Boyuan look over, Jian Rong swiftly pressed his lips together before he lifted his head and said, "It's nothing, I was just wondering why I didn't play Yasuo in that last game."

Xiao Bai said, "I'm begging you, it's enough suffering seeing that blasted thing show up in ranked games. Promise me, don't let him contaminate the high and mighty LPL stadium too, okay?"

Jian Rong asked coolly, "You think that your old man Zilean doesn't contaminate the stadium? Does your keyboard even have a Q?"

Xiao Bai: "..."

Jian Rong stood up and tossed behind him, "Going to the bathroom, be back soon."

Lu Boyuan furrowed his brows slightly. Right as he was about to call out to him, Ding-*ge* suddenly turned around and said that he wanted to discuss the third game's team composition with him.

Not long after Jian Rong walked out of the break room, he couldn't help but reach out and brace himself against the wall.

His shoulders hunched forward faintly. After he walked into the bathroom, he immediately bent over and started to dry-heave.

But he hadn't really eaten anything, so nothing came out as he tried to throw up.

With a creak, the door to the bathroom stall opened behind him. When the person who exited the stall saw the familiar team uniform in front of him, he was startled at first before he blurted out, "Oh shit."

Jian Rong weakly tilted his head and peered over, meeting the gaze of Squid's Doufu.

Squid had just lost 1:2 to MFG. There were a lot of highlights in the showdown between TTC and PUD, so Squid had chosen to stay behind and watch live at the stadium.

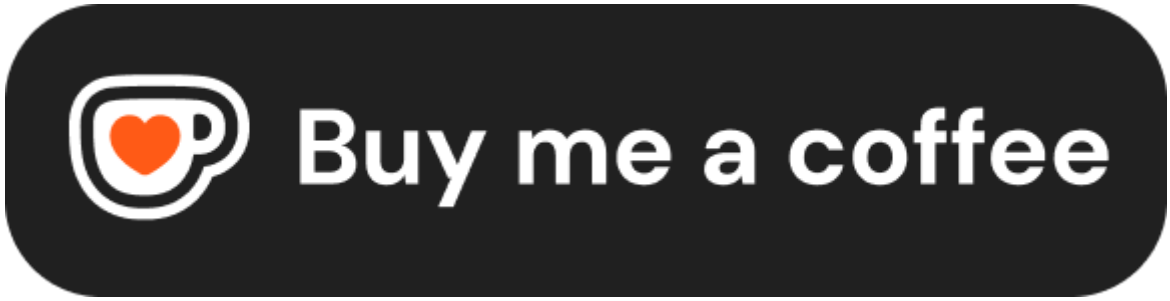
At that moment, Jian Rong didn't have any energy to argue with someone, and he probably couldn't beat him in a fight either. He contemplated for two seconds before he decided to treat the person behind him as a fart and paid no more attention to him.

Doufu was given a fright by Jian Rong's deathly pale face. He asked without thinking, "What's wrong with you? Looks like you're about to die."

Jian Rong revived a little and casted a sidelong glance at him. He explained calmly, "Not at all. The after-effects of watching your match earlier were just too great, you were so trash you made me vomit."

Translation Notes

1. *I can't remember if this has already come up or not lol but 'Song' is the last character of Pine's real name (Jiang Yusong). Song = pine, hence his game ID* ^



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ICDI Chapter 77: Someone in the team is a picky eater.

Thank you to L for the Ko-fi!

Doufu didn't expect for Jian Rong to be unwilling to admit defeat even when his face was as white as paper. "You fucker… that's because my luck wasn't good. When the game was going well for us, we got the Cloud Drake, but when things were going poorly, it was the Ocean or Infernal Drake. What's the point!"

In LoL, after the third drake spawned, its element was fixed, and the Dragon Soul buff was acquired after killing four drakes. Many people believed that the Cloud Dragon Soul was the least useful, while the effects of the Ocean and Infernal Dragon Souls were exceptionally good.

This was Jian Rong's first time hearing someone blame their loss on the Dragon Souls. He sneered, "Can't do anything about that. Fools have a fool's luck, but dumbasses don't."

"…" Doufu stuffed his hands into his pockets, but he couldn't actually get mad. He narrowed his eyes and asked, puzzled, "You know, how come you look so obedient, but the moment you open your mouth, you start insulting people?"

Jian Rong leaned against the wall. "You also look like a human, but how come I've rarely ever heard you say anything using human speech?"

Doufu: “.”

The phone in Doufu’s pocket rang; the coach called him, urging him to return to their break room.

“That top laner in your team’s like a pig, only you’re as skinny as a bamboo stick.” Doufu put away his phone. “What exactly is wrong with you? Should I call 120 for you and have them directly carry you away?”

“Carry yourself away.” Jian Rong said coldly, “Nine consecutive defeats in the regular season, and you still have the nerve to talk about other players. Hurry up and beat it.”

Doufu laughed out of anger and nodded. “You’re incredible.”

Once Doufu left, Jian Rong went to the sink and washed his face. He rubbed his stomach casually a few times before he turned and exited the bathroom.

He pushed open the door to the break room. “When are we going on stage…”

The words stopped halfway out of his mouth.

Jian Rong braced one hand against the door and stared at the somewhat empty break room. “Where is everyone?”

At that moment, there were only a couple people in the break room.

Moon glanced back at him and explained, “They went on stage.”

Jian Rong’s brows furrowed. “I’ll go over right away…”

“Don’t.” Moon called out to him, “Hezi went. The substitute is playing this game, you should just rest well.”

Jian Rong continued to stand in the doorway, and he licked his lips. “What do you mean?”

“Weren’t you feeling sick…” Moon paused. “It’s like this, Doufu knocked on our door earlier and told Captain that you threw up in the bathroom. He also said… you looked like you were about to die.”

Lu Boyuan had immediately turned to leave the room, but he ran straight into the staff member who came to tell them to go on stage.

PUD’s members were already on their way, so they had to head over quickly as well. Lu Boyuan had shot a look in the direction of the bathroom before he turned his head back and told the staff, mostly expressionlessly, *We need to replace a player for this game*.

Jian Rong listened to Moon’s explanation, his lips pale. Then he asked, “Do you know where Squid’s break room is?”

All the nearby staff instantly shook their heads.

Who the hell would dare say they knew.

“Jian Rong?” The team’s assistant manager hurriedly walked over. “I was looking for you in the bathroom. Are you okay? Do you still feel like throwing up? Does your stomach hurt? If it’s serious, I can take you to the hospital…”

“I’m fine.” Jian Rong drank some water. “I was just a bit nauseous, probably because of the low blood sugar.”

The assistant manager was confused. “Low blood sugar can cause you to vomit?”

“I assume so.” Jian Rong said, “That’s what Baidu said. In any case, I’m not gonna die, don’t worry.”

“…”

This was the assistant manager’s first time seeing someone be so nonchalant towards their own body. She took out a few packages of cookies from her pocket. “Then eat some of these, and I’ll take you to the car so you can rest.”

The sofa in the break room was small, and it was cramped even trying to fit two people on it. With all the people coming and going outside, it was also extremely noisy, and staff members would occasionally enter and exit the room as well.

After having just thrown up, Jian Rong didn’t have an appetite for anything right now. He randomly made up an excuse. “No thanks, I don’t like this flavor. I can just sit here, don’t mind me.”

“…you should still eat something.” The assistant manager persisted, “Also, God Lu was the one who told me to take you to rest in the car.”

Jian Rong froze and looked back at her.

“Really.” The assistant manager held up the jacket in her arms. “And he said that since there aren’t any blankets in the car… he told me to cover you with this jacket.”

Jian Rong went back to their team’s car.

They drove the minivan today, so the backseat was spacious. If Jian Rong curled up his legs, he could lie down.

He laid down on the seat, causing his bangs to fall to the side, revealing his neat forehead.

Jian Rong’s entire body felt somewhat weak, but he couldn’t fall asleep.

He pulled up the match livestream on his phone.

The game was already in the pick/ban phase, and the player cam just happened to be on Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan was only wearing a short-sleeved shirt, and his expression was as calm and collected as usual. His lips pressed together a little, as if he had said “mn.” He then lifted his index finger and pushed his headset’s mic a bit further away from him.

Commentator A: “PUD ended up banning Lee Sin again… did God Lu get excited from the last game? He even took off his jacket.”

Commentator B chuckled. “But as far as I can tell, he doesn’t really look all that excited either.”

Jian Rong tugged the jacket covering his body up to his chin, breathing in the faint scent of laundry detergent.

Commentator A: “I didn’t expect TTC to swap players this round. Do they have some strategy in mind?”

Commentator B: “It’s possible. Hezi is also a team fight-oriented mid laner, perhaps they want to duke it out with PUD in the late game?”

While the commentators began analyzing the reason behind the player substitute, Hezi locked in Lissandra in the game.

Lissandra was Hezi’s signature champion, and it was also the only champion Jian Rong had lost to when he was soloing Hezi. Jian Rong had seen him play Lissandra in ranked games before, and he was quite good.

Lu Boyuan locked in Kindred.

Kindred was a jungler that could deal a lot of damage in the early game. Evidently, Lu Boyuan wanted to focus on the early-mid game this round as well, but PUD had learned their lesson. There was no way they would allow Lu Boyuan to comfortably farm and gank this time around.

PUD’s ADC picked Ezreal, a champion who was very good at self-defense. As a result, after Nautilus reached the appropriate level, he instantly went to stroll with XIU through TTC’s jungle.

Xiao Bai was playing Lulu, a soft support that couldn’t accompany the jungler. Lu Boyuan was ganked twice in the jungle before he hit level 6, and though he hadn’t died, his farming was still restricted.

Under the threat of the enemy jungler and support, TTC only got one kill within twenty minutes, by Pine. But strictly speaking, it didn't give them a large advantage.

Jian Rong glanced at the match time. If this dragged on for another ten minutes… Savior's Orianna was going to reach her superior phase.

His teammates also clearly noticed this problem, and they instantly banded together to team fight. Three people on each team died after the first team fight, which wasn't a loss or a profit.

In the second team fight, PUD deliberately avoided the battle, and the engage failed.

In the third team fight, Orianna began to exert her strength.

Savior's Orianna was indeed refined to the point of perfection. He watched for their optimal positioning before he decisively flashed and released his ult, pulling in four people and dealing explosive damage. Instantly, he sent the rhythm of the game flying.

That team fight directly put TTC at the disadvantage.

It was obvious that Hezi was trying his hardest to find an opportunity, but unfortunately, both damage dealers on the opposing team had taken the Cleanse spell, which could remove his CC. This significantly reduced his threat level.

The game lasted forty-six minutes. All three of TTC's inhibitors were destroyed, and in the end, while Hezi was clearing minions, he was forcefully

engaged by the enemy support. After PUD killed off TTC's mid laner, they went on the offensive and ultimately pushed TTC's Nexus.

PUD won the regular season match, 2:1.

Right as Jian Rong exited the stream, a Weibo notification popped up at the top of his screen—[Chaotic Esports Circle: PUD defeated TTC 2:1, TTC finished with two losses! Click here to see the behind the scenes of TTC's substitution!]

"Chaotic Esports Circle" was a big, verified marketing account that his side account followed. When Jian Rong read the last part of the notification, his eyelids lowered, and he clicked on it.

"Chaotic Esports Circle" said, according to a reliable insider, Road was the one who spoke up and asked to substitute out Soft. The account also stated that Road's expression was serious, and he appeared to be angry. At the end, "Chaotic Esports Circle" emphasized that Soft wasn't in the break room at the time.

Jian Rong read over the article twice. Although none of the content was technically incorrect, it gave the netizens ample room for imagination… or perhaps, that was precisely the marketing account's strong suit.

Sure enough, there was already a war brewing in the comment section.

[Road finally couldn't take it anymore? What the hell was Soft doing in the first game today, he couldn't even oneshot Volibear while playing Syndra. Really so fucking trash, he's a whole galaxy apart from Savior.]

[Dumbass, in the next game, why don't you fucking try playing Syndra and oneshotting a Volibear 1.5 levels higher than you? Didn't you see how Soft cornered your Savior to the point that he didn't even have the balls to come out from the tower?? Also, Soft's damage was higher than Savior's in the first game, OK??]

[Whoever wins is the most powerful, alright. Like it's worth a damn if you're only good at laning, this is a five-person game, does your Soft have the ability to carry the entire team in the LPL?]

[My son didn't play in the third round. If he had, who knows who would've won. What kind of BS are the PUD fans spouting.]

[If it wasn't because he was playing awfully, why wouldn't he go up? Road personally subbed him out, but all you dumbasses are still out here shipping them together in the livestream room, what a joke.]

[Wait a sec, I heard that Soft didn't play because he wasn't feeling well? A friend of mine saw him walking out of the stadium with the support of a staff, reportedly! Reportedly, it's low blood sugar.]

[Low blood sugar? Is that possible? If even TTC's members are out here getting low blood sugar, then the other teams might as well just give up on life.]

[It's not entirely impossible, it depends on someone's body constitution, okay. Also, Soft was already very skinny.]

[Damn, how come the little bluenette is getting by worse and worse after joining the team? Is there too much pressure on him??]

[Leaving, going to spam some gifts, this dumbass son is really going to be the death of *laozi*.]

[To tell the truth, people who receive balanced nutrients and eat their meals properly typically won't get low blood sugar. What's more, TTC has nutritionists, so Soft leaving the stage because of this is a bit unreasonable.]

[+1, apart from unavoidable hand injuries, pro players should all be responsible for taking care of themselves well.]

[Feel quite sorry for Road, it was the most taxing on him in those three games. If Soft were there, they really might not have lost that third round.]

[Doesn't Road have a hand injury too?]

Before, Jian Rong truly didn't care about these netizens' comments. Regardless of what other people insulted or said, it all just bounced off him.

However, he had no choice but to admit that this time, a few of those comments had jabbed him where it hurt.

Because he was afraid of getting a food coma, he hadn't eaten breakfast and ended up having low blood sugar, resulting in his inability to play for the team, which caused them to lose the match.

This made him feel even worse than if he had been utterly destroyed by someone on stage.

Lu Boyuan completely carried with Lee Sin, and even after being targeted in the third game, he still tenaciously managed to farm; Xiao Bai and Pine

weren't at a disadvantage in the bot lane in any of the three rounds; Yuan Qian had fallen a bit behind in the first game, but in the latter two, he had braced himself against the pressure and put up a good resistance without making any more mistakes…

His teammates had given it their all. He was the biggest problem.

"Guilt" was a very unfamiliar feeling for Jian Rong. He gripped his phone with one hand and covered his eyes as a tiny hint of nausea gradually overtook him again.

After an unknown amount of time passed, the car door was pulled open.

Xiao Bai's voice made its way in first. "PUD's really starting to feel like one of those Korean teams. My scalp goes numb and my bladder tightens the moment I see one of their big late game team comps."

"98k is still way too strong, I've decided to also try my hand at Volibear. *Ai*, I really don't have the guts to look at Tieba's forums these next few days." Yuan Qian got in the car, causing it to shake a little. He looked back and asked, "Xiao Rong, you okay? I heard that you threw up?"

Jian Rong sat up. "I'm fine, it's a lot better now."

"Skinny people also have skinny people's concerns, huh." After Xiao Bai finished sighing, he said curiously, "That's right, you ran into Doufu, but you didn't end up fighting?!"

Jian Rong was expressionless. "Nearly did."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Hezi, Moon, and the staff all sat in the other car. Hezi was currently standing outside their car, and he poked his head in to say, embarrassed, "Soft, I'm sorry, I didn't play well today."

Jian Rong was startled for a second. "No, it's my fault. It has nothing to do with you."

Xiao Bai asked carelessly, "How's it your fault?"

Jian Rong said, "I had low blood sugar and couldn't play, so we lost the match."

The car went silent for a few seconds. Even Ding-*ge*, who just got in the car, glanced back in astonishment.

Yuan Qian burst out laughing. "So you're saying that if you had played, we would've won for sure?"

Xiao Bai: "…you are so fucking arrogant."

Pine silently looked out the window.

Jian Rong didn't think that there was anything wrong with his line of thought. "At least, the chance of us winning would be 20% higher."

"Even though what you're saying is true." Hezi placed a hand over his heart. "I've still been wounded. I'm going back to my car now, goodbye."

“Enough, it’s already over, so there’s no point in discussing those what-ifs. In the last game, it was clear from PUD’s team comp that they wanted to drag it out to the late game. If you had played, it’s really not certain that you would’ve been as stable as Hezi.” Ding-*ge* had met quite a few pro players in his time, and he could tell from one glance what Jian Rong was thinking. “It’s not a big deal, who doesn’t encounter a few setbacks when they first enter this profession. In the future, you just have to pay a bit more attention to your health and remember to eat on time.”

Jian Rong nodded and couldn’t help but glance outside the car window.

When he didn’t spot the person that he wanted to see, he pursed his lips and asked, “Where’s Captain?”

Xiao Bai took off his hat and was in the middle of shamelessly fixing his hair. “Who knows, right after we finished the match, he said that he had to take care of something and that it’d probably take him about ten minutes. He told us to wait in the car for him.”

Pine: “Give him a call and check?”

“I called him just now, he didn’t answer.” Ding-*ge* frowned and muttered, “I said that I could find someone to go with him, but he refused.”

Yuan Qian said, “There are so many fans nearby, nothing could’ve happened, right…”

Jian Rong couldn’t sit there any longer.

He picked up his hat and casually put it on before he stooped over and stood up. “I’ll go look for him.”

“Don’t, don’t.” Xiao Bai quickly stopped him. “I’m worried that you’ll vomit on the street and give the sanitation workers more work to do.”

Jian Rong: “I’m fine now.”

Xiao Bai reached out and grabbed his arm. “Your face is even paler than when *laozi* puts on foundation, like hell you’re fine…”

Jian Rong didn’t respond. The moment his hand landed on the car door, it was suddenly pulled open.

Lu Boyuan stood outside the door, wearing his hat and mask, only revealing a pair of long and narrow eyes.

The brim of Jian Rong’s hat was pressed very low. At first, he could only see Lu Boyuan’s team uniform and the black plastic bag in his hand.

Before he could react, someone pinched the brim of his hat and lifted it up a bit.

Lu Boyuan looked at him and asked in a voice that was muffled through the mask, “Where are you going?”

Xiao Bai interjected before Jian Rong could speak. “Jian Rong was afraid that you got lost, so he was getting ready to look for you while dragging along that broken body of his.”

Because of his low blood sugar, Jian Rong's reactions were somewhat sluggish. As a result, the thought of "*fighting to the death with Xiao Bai*" slowly arrived only after he sat back down in the last row.

On the way back to the base, Xiao Bai complained for a while about being ganked to hell in the first game before he started complaining about not having played Blitzcrank, which meant he wasn't able to use his championship skin. Ding-*ge* discussed with Yuan Qian the small mistakes that he had made in the first game during the laning phase, while Pine watched a certain variety show on his phone.

The first few rows were quite noisy, which made the last row seem particularly quiet in comparison.

Jian Rong didn't take off his hat. Taking advantage of the fact that Lu Boyuan couldn't see his eyes, he kept staring down at Lu Boyuan's hand.

He remembered that there were a few comments saying that Lu Boyuan had a hand injury?

If it was just ordinary muscle strain, it most likely wouldn't be called a "hand injury."

As he was staring, that hand suddenly moved towards him.

Lu Boyuan placed the black plastic bag on Jian Rong's lap.

Jian Rong blinked blankly. As he asked "*what is it*," he pulled open the bag.

The bag was filled with snacks. Candy, cookies, chocolate… each package and flavor was different.

Lu Boyuan removed his mask. “Eat something.”

Jian Rong remained frozen, holding open the bag. A few seconds later, he said, “…why did you buy so much?”

Lu Boyuan swept a look at him. “The assistant manager told me, someone in the team is a picky eater.”

Maybe he had rested enough; all of a sudden, Jian Rong didn’t feel sick anymore.

He ate half a chocolate bar and two packages of cookies. Before he closed his eyes to take a nap, he also tossed a piece of candy into his mouth.

He took off his hat and leaned his head against the window. Though his eyes were shut, he wasn’t able to fall asleep.

Jian Rong’s current mood was a little strange.

Upon receiving this bag of snacks, which most likely was worth less than 500 yuan in total, he seemed to be a bit too happy—he felt even happier than the first time he made it into Challenger, than the first time he received a gift in his stream, than the first time he was recommended on the streaming platform’s home page.

After Lu Boyuan finished playing three games in a row, the first thing he did upon leaving the stage was to buy sweets for him.

When that thought popped up, Jian Rong couldn't help but bite down on the candy in his mouth.

Ding-*ge* looked behind him. "Did you think that XIU's playing was just so-so this match…"

Lu Boyuan was playing on his phone. Without even looking up, he said lowly, "Keep your voice down."

Ding-*ge*: "…"

Ding-*ge* glanced at Jian Rong, who was leaning against the window, asleep. He lowered his voice. "I'll tell Auntie to make a few more dishes tonight. We'll replenish it quickly for him in these next few days."

"There's no point in adding dishes," Lu Boyuan said. "Have to keep an eye on him."

Ding-*ge* nodded. "Also true. Auntie's breakfasts are so delicious, yet he can still restrain himself and not eat it… how about I hire a life assistant for him?"

Lu Boyuan's brows furrowed. "No need, that's troublesome."

Ding-*ge*: "Then maybe I can personally…"

"I'll look after him." Lu Boyuan said.

Ding-*ge*: "?"

Jian Rong: "…"

Ding-*ge* was briefly startled before he faintly understood what Lu Boyuan was saying.

“If you make a mid laner I paid 1.4 freaking million for massage your hand, that’s whatever.” Ding-*ge* was incredulous. “But did I spend over 10 million yuan on you so that you can go micromanage what someone else is eating…”

Before Ding-*ge* could finish what he was saying, the car seemed to roll over a large pit, causing the entire car to lurch severely.

Jian Rong tilted to the side because of the jolt. Right as his head was about to knock against the glass, someone abruptly reached out and supported his neck.

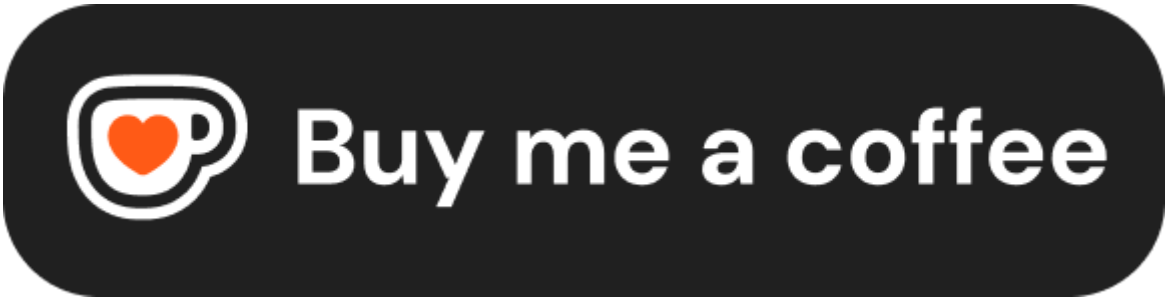
Since he had just finished playing three games, Lu Boyuan’s palm was still hot.

He easily cupped a hand around Jian Rong’s neck, and with a slight bit of force, he adjusted Jian Rong so that he was leaning against Lu Boyuan’s own shoulder.

Ding-*ge* was jostled back into his seat, and instantly, he quietly told the chauffeur to drive a bit slower, as there was a team member sleeping in the car.

In the last row. Jian Rong, whose eyes were closed the entire time, felt his heart thump wildly. His mind was in chaos, his eyelashes trembling so much that they nearly left behind afterimages in the air.

Wei: OMGOMGOMG this is!! So cute!!! Also RongRong really is only obedient to LBY lol



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ICDI Chapter 78: I thought I was coaxing you.

Thank you to Anon for the Ko-Fi!

By the time they arrived back at the base, the doctor was already there.

He tested Jian Rong's blood sugar, and it was just barely at a normal level.

"It's slightly better now." The team's doctor put away the blood glucose monitor and asked, "Has this condition affected you before?"

Jian Rong shook his head. If this had ever happened to him before, there was no way he would have allowed himself to repeat the same mistake again.

"Then you should be more careful in the future." The doctor thought a bit. "However, vomiting is a relatively rare symptom of low blood sugar. Perhaps it's because you were in the middle of a competitive match as well, so there was too much pressure on you. If your stomach continues to feel uncomfortable, you should go to the hospital to get it checked out."

Jian Rong nodded. "Okay."

"Do you still feel sick?" Ding-*ge* glanced at the object in Jian Rong's hands. "How long are you going to keep holding that bag? Can't you put it down on the table?"

"I'm feeling a lot better now." Jian Rong tied the plastic bag closed and hauled over his equipment bag to stuff the plastic bag inside.

Lu Boyuan looked at the doctor. “Is there any way to treat this problem?”

“The most important thing is just lifestyle. He should be eating regularly, and his diet should be balanced in terms of nutrients. I’ll explain the situation to your base’s housekeeper in a bit.” The doctor paused. “Also, when going out in the future, bring some candy or cookies with you.”

“Okay.” Lu Boyuan dipped his head. “We troubled you to come out here tonight.”

“It’s not any trouble, I can also check up on your hand while I’m at it.” The doctor cast a look down. “You definitely exceeded the practice time again these past few days, didn’t you? I told you, this hand of yours…”

Sensing Jian Rong’s gaze float towards him, Lu Boyuan interrupted, “We can discuss this later.”

Since a team member wasn’t feeling well, Ding-*ge* decided to review the match tomorrow after they all woke up.

After dinner, Jian Rong was ushered off to sleep.

As soon as he went upstairs, Xiao Bai exhaled. “Jian Rong’s complexion seems to be a little better? His face was so ashen backstage, he looked like he was going to faint at any moment.”

Yuan Qian agreed. “When we got back to the car, he also looked quite pale. *Ai*, he’s still too skinny.”

“He was watching the livestream at the time.” Pine said evenly, “I heard the commentators’ voices.”

“Watching the livestream…” Xiao Bai crinkled his face. “His ability to resist pressure really is strong. I can imagine with my toes how terrible the barrage must’ve been in today’s broadcast. No wonder he didn’t say a single thing during dinner.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t say anything. He slipped his phone into his pocket before he turned around and went into the break room by himself.

After Jian Rong came out from the shower, he discovered quite a few WeChat messages on his phone.

[Qian: Xiao Rong, do you like soup? Your sister-in-law said that she wants to cook soup for you. Never mind how she usually seems so careless, the soup that she makes is especially savory (not trying to say that our Auntie’s soup isn’t savory)]

[Pine: [Sharing link – What should sufferers of low blood sugar pay attention to?]]

[Xiao Bai: There’s a small tray in the bottom layer of my computer desk with a lot of chocolate inside. If you feel ill in the future during practice, you can directly take some to eat.]

Jian Rong was still feeling a little worn out. He sat at the head of his bed and repeatedly read over the messages. Quite a few times, he pulled up the keyboard, but he didn’t know how to reply.

Since a very long time ago, he had stopped receiving these kinds of messages. He had many people added on his WeChat: streamers, room moderators, super-admin; nearly all the messages he received had something to do with streaming. There was no need to reply to the occasional well wishes that he received during the holidays either.

Jian Rong typed out an "*okay*." A while later, he added a "*thank you*."

Less than two minutes after he sent the messages, someone knocked on his door.

Lu Boyuan had stuck one hand in his pocket and was holding a mug in the other. He said, "Drink this before you sleep."

Jian Rong took the mug and smelled the faint fragrance of honey. "…thank you."

A silence descended for two seconds.

Lu Boyuan gave a very light sigh. "Can I come in?"

Jian Rong instantly pulled open the door.

Jian Rong had just finished showering, so the room was filled with the familiar scent of his body wash. Lu Boyuan had once stayed awake and smelled that fragrance for an entire night.

He didn't walk into the room itself; he merely crossed his arms and leaned against the wall. "Today's match…"

Jian Rong answered swiftly, "I had a lot of problems."

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. “In your opinion, what were your problems?”

“My ability to provide assistance was too weak, my teamwork wasn’t good, I didn’t think about my teammates during team fights.” Jian Rong lowered his head. “…I didn’t eat breakfast properly and got sick, resulting in my absence from the third game.”

Lu Boyuan nodded. “And.”

Jian Rong thought a bit. “I didn’t help out the top lane in the early game. There was a wave in the middle where I should’ve gone to the top lane with you.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t reply, indicating that he should continue.

“And…” Jian Rong was in a poor condition today, so he only vaguely remembered the details about the match. “Let me think.”

Lu Boyuan prompted mildly, “Outside of the competition.”

Understanding instantly dawned on Jian Rong. “…I shouldn’t have insulted Doufu for being trash.”

Lu Boyuan: “.”

“And I shouldn’t have called him a dumbass.

“Nor should I have mocked him for his nine consecutive defeats.”

“He’s not relevant to this.” Lu Boyuan interrupted Jian Rong levelly as he looked down at him. “If you felt sick, why didn’t you say anything.”

Jian Rong was slightly startled. “I was fine after I threw up, it wouldn’t have affected my gameplay.”

“This has nothing to do with the match.” Lu Boyuan went quiet for a few seconds before he said, “When the team signed you on, it wasn’t so that you could work yourself to the bone.”

Jian Rong pressed his lips together. “…my bad.”

Lu Boyuan watched him silently for a while.

“It’s true that you had a lot of problems today.”

Jian Rong closed his eyes. Right as his heart started to sink, he heard Lu Boyuan continue, “But they were all blunders that a newcomer would make. There weren’t any major mistakes.”

Jian Rong’s head shot up.

Lu Boyuan’s gaze was calm. “You’re very strong individually, which is why you like to act on your own and want to produce brilliant plays in matches, as well as be the starter for every game… that way of thinking is very normal.

“If you were playing in the LSPL, which is full of newcomers, you would already be the predetermined champion, and you would most likely even receive transfer invitations from other large-scale clubs…

“But your starting point was too high, so now you’re facing teams that are all very developed. Maybe they can’t beat you in a 1v1, but they know how

to restrict and suppress you. They have analysts who specialize in researching your statistics, and they probably know your weak points even better than you do—that's why I think that it's very normal for you not to be used to this kind of playstyle."

Perhaps it was because there was a comforting note in Lu Boyuan's voice. Or perhaps it was because Jian Rong had been streaming for too long and was already used to the entire barrage insulting him whenever he made the smallest mistake.

In any case, at that moment, Jian Rong's heart ached slightly.

He said, "…but I've already been playing in practice matches for several months now."

"Yes." Lu Boyuan said unhurriedly, "Twisted Fate, Orianna, Galio, you've been practicing all of those competitive champions. You've been working hard, it's just still not quite enough. Savior excels at providing assistance and team fighting, and he understands better than you do what he should be doing at every moment. If you could catch up to him by just training for a few months… that would truly be a little unfair to his price of eight million yuan a season."

Jian Rong cast his eyes downward and remembered, once again, the fact that he was only a mid laner worth 1.4 million yuan.

"However, the regular season is precisely the opportunity for teams to adjust themselves. You still have a lot of time to practice." Lu Boyuan lifted a brow. "The precondition being that your body can hang in there."

“I know,” Jian Rong nodded, “I’ll eat properly.”

Lu Boyuan first dipped his head, before a few seconds passed and he suddenly tilted his head to the side, huffing out a laugh.

Jian Rong subconsciously asked, “Why’re you laughing?”

Lu Boyuan said, “It’s nothing.”

He just felt like it was somewhat cute seeing this person, who was constantly scowling and arguing from the sky to the earth, now lower his head and say “*I’ll eat properly*.”

Lu Boyuan questioned, “You’re feeling better now?”

“Mn, I’m fine.” Jian Rong paused for a moment before he abruptly asked, “Did… you enlighten the others like this before too?”

Jian Rong didn’t have any other intentions; he just thought that Lu Boyuan’s words were very effective. In the short span of ten minutes, he felt like he had completely revived.

Lu Boyuan was dumbfounded for two seconds.

He mulled over the phrase “*enlighten*” and asked, “Did you think I was enlightening you?”

Jian Rong gave a slight start. “Ah.”

Lu Boyuan smiled. “I thought I was coaxing you.”

The unfamiliar word “*coax*” suddenly charged into Jian Rong’s brain.

He didn’t know why, but his attention was entirely focused on that one word. It revolved and rotated around his mind to the point that he almost didn’t recognize it anymore.

At another unexpected moment, like a balloon popped by boiling water, a turbulent stream of heat rushed through his body and directly engulfed all of his cells.

In the dim lighting, Lu Boyuan’s eyes were very gentle and soft. Jian Rong pursed his lips, licked them, and opened his mouth, but nothing came out.

Finally, Lu Boyuan reached over and opened the door. He said, “You should rest.”

—

Jian Rong had a good night’s rest. For the first time since joining the team, he didn’t have a single dream.

Maybe because he slept too early, it wasn’t yet nine when he woke up the next morning.

He hadn’t pulled the curtains shut last night before going to bed, and the morning sun beat against Jian Rong’s eyelids, warm and comfortable. He relished it for a while with his eyes closed before he picked up his phone out of habit—

[Chaotic Esports Circle: TTC Incident Follow-up—Road disappears after the match with a dark face, suspected to be dissatisfied with the new mid laner.]

[Chaotic Esports Circle: Was it right or wrong for TTC to take a risk and bring in a completely inexperienced newcomer as their starter? Click here to see a retired coach's deep analysis.]

Did this marketing account not need to sleep? Posting so many moronic articles in one night?

Jian Rong didn't even check out the content of the articles before unfollowing the account. He threw off his blanket and got out of bed to wash up.

The base was extremely quiet, since the auntie only came at nine. Jian Rong poured himself a cup of milk and sat down in front of his computer, yawning as he started his stream.

There were even less people in an early morning stream than one held in the middle of the night. For the first few minutes, there weren't a lot of flying comments on the screen.

[Streaming right after losing a match, are you asking to be flamed?]

[How come your stream times are becoming more and more magical? Isn't today a day off?]

[What team's 'day off' is actually a day off?]

[This is a pretty good time, Dad just woke up and can curse you out a few times to get an energy boost.]

[There's still three minutes before the antis arrive on the battlefield, Dad's gonna get up and do some tai chi first to warm up the body.]

Many professional players wouldn't choose to stream right after losing a match, because before the next losing team appeared, the antis' attention would all be concentrated on you.

Seeing Jian Rong start streaming, the new dad fans grumbled and swore worriedly. Meanwhile, the person in question tore open a bag of cookies and ate one before propping up his legs and opening yesterday's match replay.

"Why spam question marks?" Jian Rong said lazily, "Standard procedure, reviewing the game."

[What standard procedure?]

[Before, when this B didn't play well in a ranked game, he would often watch the recording and review the game. Later on, probably because he grew more popular and thought that game reviews would cause him to lose fans, the dumbass stopped doing it.]

[The key point is that this isn't a problem with the match, this is a problem with the player's personal character. This is my first time seeing a pro player not be able to play due to low blood sugar.]

[You should just get the hell out of TTC, TTC can't accept the great god that you are, don't come and wreck my team, OK?]

[The other teams don't want you either, this person here is recommending that you directly retire and go back to streaming. After all, that profession has no standards for its employees' characters, don't screw over other people.]

[Hahahaha your team? How'd you suddenly become the representative of a certain team? And who exactly might you be? You have quite some nerve hah, dumbass trolls.]

"It wasn't because I thought reviewing the game would cause me to lose fans, it's because your dad grew stronger." Jian Rong scanned the barrage. "It was low blood sugar, I was being a dumbass and didn't eat breakfast. You can flame me as you like for that, no need to block people, room mods… I have no plans to retire for the time being, nor do I have any plans to transfer. So no matter how upset you are, you'll still have to watch me finish out this spring season. Those who can't accept it can personally come to the stadium to gank me."

[What's the purpose of a mid laner that can't carry? To be a guard for the mid lane's defensive towers?]

Jian Rong jumped to the second before the match began in the livestream replay. "That's true, it's my fault for not carrying. Next time for sure."

After that, Jian Rong really did start to seriously watch the match.

This turn of events put the antis at a loss for two seconds. Then they started to amplify their firepower, attempting to stir up drama with the passerby spectators—

[You obviously could've tower dived here, yet you didn't flash and follow up, how trash.]

[If you don't play an assassin, then you don't know how to kill someone??]

Jian Rong didn't say anything. He knew that he hadn't done anything wrong in this wave; Savior had been in possession of his cleanse, flash, and ult, and was just waiting for Jian Rong to tower dive.

The antis continued to work hard, except a few minutes later, they discovered that the barrage was moving in a somewhat odd direction.

The other people in the barrage were also flaming Soft along with them, that was true.

But the people flaming him… were all freaking touting the icons representing his livestream's diehard fans.

[Dumbass, the dads helped organize it for you on Tieba last night, you should start watching from eight minutes.]

[Savior's already stepping onto Pine's face, yet you're still freaking here in the mid lane clearing minions. If I were Pine, I would've definitely AFKed next to the fountain and started interacting with you.]

[Either you should've gone to gank them before Savior could, or you should've just not gone at all and pushed the mid towers earlier. Look at you, going back and forth like a dumbass and not getting anything done.]

[Trash to the point that I feel embarrassed telling someone that I'm your dad when I go outside.]

[Trash to the point that even Dad's dreams last night were filled with your dumbass Syndra running a marathon.]

[If you're gonna be a loner in ranked, that's whatever, but you try to pull the same trick during a match? Did you not practice during your practice matches?]

It was possible to bind your LoL game ID to your StarTV account. Some antis sensed that something was off, so they clicked on the LoL icons behind the usernames of these people in the barrage who were in the middle of criticizing and lecturing Jian Rong. They were successfully blinded by the resulting ranks.

Diamond, Master, there were even some damn Challenger ranks. Even the lowest rank was still Gold.

Jian Rong silently rewatched the video clip twice. During those few minutes, his gameplay was indeed a bit too independent.

In practice matches, of course Jian Rong had also practiced providing assistance, but he very rarely tried to outdo someone in terms of support when he was playing Syndra. He had also never encountered an Aurelion Sol like Savior's, who went to gank so frequently.

He unlocked his phone and wrote down the time stamps for Savior's support moments in his notes.

Half of his milk was now in his stomach. There was a patch of white above Jian Rong's upper lip.

[Also, that team fight at 28 mins, just take a look and see how trash you were. You were standing in such a good position, but you only knocked back two people with your spheres.]

[Most importantly, you didn't stun 98k, and the cost was being smashed to death by one slap. So embarrassing.]

[Yuan Qian's a noob, Soft's also a noob. Speaking of which, isn't Yuan Qian's contract about to expire? Perfect, you two can both get the hell out, hand in hand.]

"I remember that wave… you're right, I didn't do the knockbacks well." Jian Rong ate another cookie and shifted his finger, blocking and kicking the person who brought up Yuan Qian. "A game review is a game review. If you want to insult me, then do it. Those who want to take advantage of the situation and muddy the waters, you can get lost far away from here. Dad isn't gonna indulge you all."

After he said that, he pressed 'play' again.

It took him almost an hour to review the first game.

The antis transitioned from their original vehemence to calmness—these fans were flaming Jian Rong even more intensely than the antis were, what the hell were they supposed to do with that.

In the middle, the auntie pushed open the door and came in to ask him if she needed to make breakfast. Jian Rong nodded. “Yes, sorry for the trouble.”

[Are you a pig? You ate two little bags of cookies and you’re gonna keep eating?]

[That stuff doesn’t have enough nutrients, the little dumbass is still growing.]

[Eighteen year olds are still growing? That’s probably as good as his height is gonna get for the rest of this lifetime, but perhaps his weight can still rise.]

Jian Rong broke the hard-boiled egg into two halves and stuffed one piece into his mouth. He answered indistinctly, “Bullshit… at the very least, I can reach 180[1].”

[180 cm in your dreams.]

[You don’t even blush when you say something like that?]

[Son, Dad saw someone say that Road’s face went dark because you pissed him off so bad? Is that true or fake?]

[To be precise, Road left because of how pissed he was. After the match, he left without even going back to the break room hahaha.]

Jian Rong’s chewing slowed down a little.

[It can't be that bad. Honestly, that match wasn't completely my son's fault either ah.]

[Love well, whip well.]

[Love my ass, with how trash he is they probably broke up immediately after.]

[Broke up? Wasn't my son in an unrequited love this entire time? To put it more accurately, my son one-sidedly lost his love.]

[My son is so tragic. Lost the match, forfeited his love.]

[It's pretty good, this way my son doesn't need to be gay anymore.]

The moment they brought up Lu Boyuan, he recalled what happened last night.

Could a captain use the word "*coax*" when looking after his teammates?

Did men… need to coax other men?

Sensing his ears start to burn again, Jian Rong hastily swallowed his egg. He was about to interrupt the barrage's rhythm when someone pushed open the practice room door.

Lu Boyuan walked in wearing casual clothes, and he glanced at the breakfast on Jian Rong's table before he looked at his computer screen.

Jian Rong hadn't expected him to get up so early. He tilted his head back and stared blankly at Lu Boyuan's jaw.

Before either of them could speak, the cooking auntie came in first.

The auntie wanted to clear away Jian Rong's bowl and chopsticks. She knew that it was typically tough on these youngsters, so she never made them do the things that she was capable of doing.

When she saw Lu Boyuan, she was startled. "Xiao Lu, how come you're awake so early? Was I too noisy when I was sweeping the hallway?"

"No." Lu Boyuan said evenly, "I was afraid that he wouldn't eat breakfast, so I set an alarm and woke up."

Jian Rong had one hand propped against the keyboard, and his expression grew even more dazed.

"I see…" The auntie's mind was set at ease. "Then should I make you some breakfast as well? What do you want to eat?"

"The same as him is fine, I'll be troubling you."

Once the auntie left, Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and asked, "Why're you streaming so early."

Jian Rong hummed. "To pass the time."

Noticing that Lu Boyuan was looking at the video on his computer monitor, Jian Rong explained, "Ding-*ge* isn't here yet, so I decided to review on my own for a bit."

"Done now?"

"…mn."

Lu Boyuan nodded. "Let me turn on my computer, and we can queue together for a few games."

Jian Rong instantly said, "Okay."

Lu Boyuan was about to head over to his own computer when he spotted the remaining half of the egg sitting on Jian Rong's desk. He reached out a hand and ruffled Jian Rong's hair. "Finish your food."

Jian Rong stuffed the other half of the egg into his mouth.

Question marks slid across the barrage for a few short seconds.

[When will that dumbass marketing account die?]

[……forget it, if he's gay then so be it. Being gay with Road is still social climbing for you, son.]

[Your relationship, do the other people in your team know about it?]

[That's a dark face? That's a dark face??? If they took it one fucking step further they would be streaming going to bed with each other!!]

[Two minutes ago, I came across the video of Road inserting his fingers into the dumbass' mouth. Whatever, I won't say anything else, wishing you 99^2]

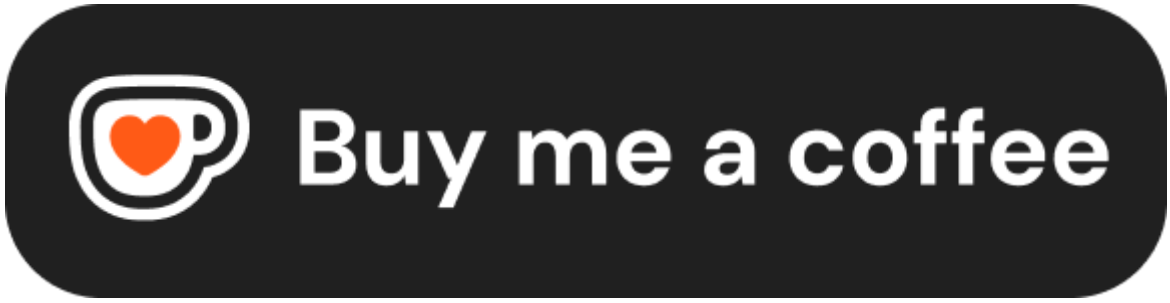
[Requesting video, wishing you 99]

[Wishing you 99]

[Wishing you 99]

Translation Notes

1. *About 5'11"* ^
2. *Pun here – 9 (jiu) sounds the same as "long time". So it's slang for blessing a couple / hoping they'll be together for a long time* ^



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ICDI Chapter 79: “No butterflies challenge, esports male gods version”

Jian Rong finished eating his egg before he finally understood what video of ‘fingers reaching into his mouth’ the barrage was talking about…

Jian Rong said, “Stop spamming, we were in a rush to get on stage at the time and my fingers were covered with dust from the wall. That’s why Captain handed me one.”

After he said that, he glanced behind him and saw Lu Boyuan turning on his computer, drinking water, and putting on his headphones.

Taking advantage of the moment Lu Boyuan put on his headphones, Jian Rong cupped a hand around his mic and asked, bluntly and quietly, “What video? Where’d you see it? Send me the link… reliving the moment my ass, I’m trying to refute baseless rumors here… is anyone going to freaking send it to me or not?”

Since they hadn’t reviewed the match last night, the other three members also woke up one after another before noon.

At 10:45, everyone’s phones chimed at the same time.

[Ding-*ge*: Too many things were happening yesterday, so I forgot to say this. Uninstall Tieba and Weibo for the next few days, and you can take it easy on the streaming too, don’t screw yourself over. I just woke up, I’ll head over after I get ready, and we can review the match an hour from now.]

[Ding-*ge*: Is Jian Rong up? Tell him to eat breakfast.]

[Xiao Bai: He's up, he's been awake for a few hours. Right now he's in the middle of a massacre with my *ge* in the Summoner's Rift, they just seized 16 points from Da Niu.]

[Pine: You sent that too late.]

Ding-*ge*'s eyes were barely open, and he was still in the state of being where nothing in the world had anything to do with him. He turned his head and kissed his wife before he replied with a question mark.

Xiao Bai sent him a video.

Ding-*ge* clicked on it, confused.

The video was shot from a higher angle looking down, and the first thing that popped up was the image of their mid laner's back as he played LoL.

The teenager had one leg hiked over the other, with his headphones only covering one ear. There were two fruit gummies next to his keyboard, and you could faintly see that he was laning against someone in the mid lane as he chattered away.

"Thank you 'Soft loses a game and grows shorter by a centimeter' for the Little Star… wait a moment, don't fight for now. Trolls, you stop too, watch my mechanics right here first. If you can learn it, it'll be enough to get you into Platinum, I won't even ask for your apprenticeship fees."

The keyboard clattered loudly.

“Immediately open with Ignite, don’t give them any chances. First W, then Q, and like that… they’re dead.

“Did everyone get it? If you didn’t, you can watch the replay at 0.5 times the speed later on—water friends who know how to screen record, help me record the clip. It’d be best if you added some badass special effects and music too, you can directly DM the video to me on Weibo or to my stream account. Letting you all know in advance, there are no rewards, I’m a cheapskate, thank you.”

The video came to an abrupt end.

[Yuan Qian: Xiao Rong’s already been streaming for over two hours.]

[Ding-*ge*: What has he said??]

[Pine: The same as usual.]

[Yuan Qian: He just finished settling a dispute with a water friend over who is whose dad.]

[Xiao Bai: Reasonably speaking, I feel like there wasn’t anything wrong with Jian Rong’s play. That water friend was being too much, they called him a Smurf the moment they opened their mouth.]

[Ding-*ge*: ???]

[Ding-*ge*: Isn’t he duo Q’ing with Xiao Lu?]

[Xiao Bai: En, my *ge* told him to make sure to avoid using obscene language.]

Ding-*ge* rejected his wife's return kiss, rushed out of his house like there was a fire under his butt, and forcefully put a stop to this stream, which might have ended up triggering who knows what kind of public opinions.

Today's match review was destined to take longer than usual.

Ding-*ge*'s expression was more grave than it had been in the past, and his wording was more severe than before too. All five of them were scolded at one point or another; even Lu Boyuan was on the receiving end of a few lines. He had made a small mistake in the third game, causing a gank to fail, so he hadn't been able to establish an advantage in the early game for his teammates.

The one who was scolded the worst was Yuan Qian.

The look on Yuan Qian's face was very bad, and he continuously nodded. His deaths in the first game were replayed over and over numerous times, and his ears went red from the lecturing.

"If you can't beat 98k in the lane, I won't blame you for that, since your strengths are resisting pressure and engaging. But you completely collapsed in this game, your playstyle was extremely rushed. When 98k tower dove, you could've run away, yet you insisted on turning around, wanting to trade. In the end, it didn't work and you ended up dying… there's a lot of problems in this wave." Ding-*ge* frowned. "98k isn't as good as you are in the late game, but with you feeding him to that extent, what late game is there even to speak of? You threw away your own strong points."

Yuan Qian nodded. “My fault.”

Ding-*ge* grew tired from talking and took a sip of water. “Can you fix it before the playoffs?”

“Yes.”

As for Jian Rong, it was just the same old observations.

After per usual scolding him for his loner behavior for half an hour, Ding-*ge* suddenly shifted gears. “—however, it’s not as if you didn’t improve at all.”

Jian Rong: “…”

He thought that Ding-*ge* was trying to use the carrot-and-stick approach, so he raised his head and said, “You can scold me as you like, no need to say all that. I can take it.”

“I’m being serious.” Ding-*ge* lifted an eyebrow. “At least you know to provide assistance now, even if you looked like you were window-shopping because you were too late every time.”

“That’s true.” Xiao Bai agreed, “Back then, I was afraid that you wouldn’t come at all, and then you would ask P-baby and me ‘*are you having fun feeding, noobs*’.”

Jian Rong: “.”

After the match review finished, Jian Rong stayed behind.

Ding-*ge* exited the video and glanced up at him. “Is something the matter?”

“Mn.” Jian Rong paused. “With a situation like mine… how can I quickly improve? Though we have practice matches every day, it seems like it’s not quite enough.”

Prior to this, Jian Rong was always playing the game by himself and trying to figure out how to become stronger on his own. This was his first time asking the team’s coach a question since joining the team.

“Practicing support is very simple. You just have to pay more attention to what’s going on in the other two lanes, don’t focus only on laning.” Ding-*ge* contemplated for a few seconds. “Aside from that, I think there’s another issue: you’re still not good enough at team fights. You keep making the mistake of disregarding your teammates for the sake of getting a kill. As for that, I recommend that you attempt to have more contact with each person individually.”

Jian Rong didn’t understand. “What’s that mean?”

“Like duo queue or flex queue, both work. Under the current circumstances, you guys still don’t have enough coordination with one another yet. You have to try to understand your teammates and learn their habits when they’re team fighting, laning, and tower diving.

“In a nutshell, you should queue with the others more. Why are you fixated only on Xiao Lu?”

“…oh.” Jian Rong nodded. “Got it.”

—

In the following few days after the game review, TTC's practice match schedule grew even more packed, and training also finished later and later every day. Frequently, all the members were still sitting in the practice room at two in the morning.

Tonight, right as Lu Boyuan logged on, XIU's party invite popped up.

Lu Boyuan checked his friends list. All of his teammates were online with the '*in game*' status.

He cast his eyes down and clicked accept.

XIU had most likely been practicing for a while too, and his voice was somewhat hoarse. "Hey bro, let's play a few games. My role is to be carried, I'm too exhausted from playing tonight."

Lu Boyuan gave an "en."

"Oh right." XIU asked, amused, "How come I haven't seen you duo queueing with that little friend of yours lately? These days when I meet him in ranked, if he's not queueing with Xiao Bai, then he's playing with Yuan Qian or Pine."

Lu Boyuan selected his roles and didn't say anything.

It was true that Jian Rong hadn't asked him to duo queue recently. He had even declined Lu Boyuan's offer last night, awkwardly saying that he had already invited Xiao Bai.

XIU continued, “Did you end up lecturing him that day after the match, so he doesn’t want to play with you anymore?”

Lu Boyuan knew that wasn’t it; Jian Rong wasn’t really one to nitpick over something like that.

But as of late, Jian Rong had indeed only played a few games with him. Thinking back on it now, it was probably just because it hadn’t been convenient for him to refuse in front of the stream’s water friends.

Lu Boyuan began to ponder whether it was because he had been too obvious about it that night and had scared Jian Rong away.

If that truly was the case, and a single use of the word “*coax*” was enough to make Jian Rong avoid him… Jian Rong was really rather too straight.

Thinking about this, Lu Boyuan felt even less inclined to talk.

“No way? Did I hit the nail on the head?” XIU roared with laughter before he started to earnestly analyze for him, “*Ai*, let me tell you, from one glance you can tell that Soft is the type of person who has a big ego. If there are any problems, you can’t just jab his forehead and say it, you have to be a bit more tactful…”

“He’s not as petty as you think he is.” Lu Boyuan’s brows furrowed. “Did you used to talk this much when playing ranked before?”

“I’ve always been a brilliant conversationalist.” XIU shook his legs, one of which was propped up over the other. “By the way, you better not forget about the get-together on Sunday night.”

Lu Boyuan randomly banned a champion. “I know.”

Everyone went offline at 2:30 AM once again that night.

Right as Jian Rong turned off his computer and stood up, Xiao Bai tugged on his shirt. “Jian Rong, come here, let’s watch this together.”

Jian Rong lowered his eyes lazily.

Xiao Bai clicked on a link that a fan had privately messaged him. The link summary was: “*no butterflies challenge, esports male gods version*”.

Jian Rong frowned. “What’s this?”

“Oh, I know this.” Yuan Qian powered off his computer and also joined the crowd. “It’s a game you can play with friends. You show a video with a bunch of clips of handsome guys or beautiful girls, and if while watching the video, anyone smiles or makes an expression that clearly shows they’re ‘feeling butterflies,’ they’ll be punished… my wife made me play this before.”

Pine asked, “Then what happened.”

Yuan Qian said expressionlessly, “She beat me up.”

Jian Rong had no interest whatsoever in this, and he didn’t want to waste his sleeping time. He said absently, “They’re all male pro players, what’s the point of me watching as a guy?”

There was no fun in watching this kind of video alone. Xiao Bai immediately said, “You fucking dragged me around and forced me to duo queue with

you for ten hours, so what's the big deal if I want you to watch a video with me now? What's more, why can't a guy feel butterflies for another guy? Are you looking down on gay love?"

"…" Jian Rong slowly drew back the foot that had just taken a step away.

Xiao Bai was satisfied. "Let me guess, Pine is definitely in this, as well as my *ge*… and me!"

Before this, Lu Boyuan was replying to a group chat and wasn't paying attention to what they were talking about.

Hearing Xiao Bai mention him, he cast a look at Jian Rong, who was standing behind Xiao Bai, and also came to a stop next to them.

Xiao Bai clicked on the video, and the background music gradually started playing.

"*Ai*, Western pro players have an unfair advantage in these kinds of videos, their features are already very clearly defined." Yuan Qian crossed his arms and sighed ruefully.

Foreign professional players took up half of the video; the LPL players were put at the end.

The first LPL player to take the stage was Doufu. The inserted clip was recently filmed, and the person in the video behaved exactly the same way as he did in Jian Rong's mind: as someone who was asking for a spanking.

Judging from the background, he was in Squid's base. Doufu was sitting in his gaming chair, and it was unclear what he overheard, but he propped a hand up under his chin and faced the camera, tugging up the corner of his lips in a smirk.

Jian Rong felt so overwhelmed by the grease that he wanted to throw him into a pan.

Did fans see esports pro players through too much of a filter these days?

There was no way anyone would feel butterflies when looking at a pig like this, right??

Following that was a video of Pine backstage during last year's summer season. He sat on the sofa, eyebrows knitted together as he stared at his phone. When the camera panned in closer, it was clear that he was playing Fight the Landlord.

"Hahahahahahaha." Xiao Bai tugged at Pine's hand, laughing like a fool. "P-baby, look at this, you're both dumb as hell and handsome here."

Pine swept a glance over. "Ridiculous."

Jian Rong watched the video, feeling no flutters at all. In his mind, he simply summarized what he had learned from today's ranked games—Xiao Bai was fairly decent at playing aggressive supports, and if Xiao Bai picked Thresh or Leona in a future match, Jian Rong could choose a mid laner that was good at providing assistance, such as…

Lu Boyuan appeared on the screen.

Such as…

Jian Rong couldn't help but lift his hand and bite down on his thumb.

Such as… such as what again?

Lu Boyuan's video appeared to have been taken quite a long time ago. It seemed to have been filmed by a staff member, and the quality wasn't very high.

Lu Boyuan was wearing their team's short-sleeved shirt uniform, and he stood in a corner of the break room, watching a game replay on his phone. Two seconds later, Xiao Bai said something to him, which made Lu Boyuan lower his head and laugh out loud.

The person holding the camera most likely called his name, and when Lu Boyuan looked over, his smile hadn't completely disappeared yet. There was a teasing note to his smile, and the outer corners of his eyes slanted upwards. His pitch-black irises looked as if they could peer into the depths of someone's heart.

…

Oh no.

Jian Rong bit down so hard on his thumb that it turned white, as he stared at the computer screen without blinking.

He could clearly sense his heartbeat slowly speeding up. It leaped into his throat the moment the Lu Boyuan in the video turned his head, and even

the finger that he was gnawing on felt like it was trembling.

Before the video finished, Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian already began exchanging their opinions on it. Jian Rong attempted to concentrate on what they were saying, but not a single word sunk in.

Xiao Bai: "@! #%¥#… isn't that right, Jian Rong?"

The instant Xiao Bai called his name, Jian Rong suddenly felt guilty.

Extremely guilty.

He had no idea what Xiao Bai just said, so he dully replied with: "Mn."

His thumb hurt a bit from him biting it. Jian Rong shifted his teeth upward and started chewing on a different area.

Another few seconds ticked by. Finally, Jian Rong couldn't restrain himself any longer, and he glanced to the side in a manner that he personally believed to be extraordinarily careful, covert, and unnoticeable—

He met Lu Boyuan's eyes.

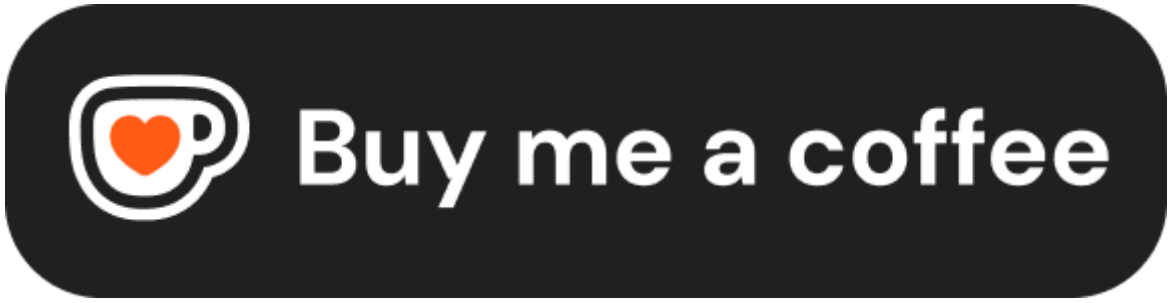
Those eyes that had been in the video were currently looking down, and the faint fluorescence of the computer monitor reflected moons in his irises.

Lu Boyuan's gaze was calm, and it wasn't clear how long he had been watching Jian Rong.

Yuan Qian was standing between them in a position slightly closer to the computer, so he didn't manage to obstruct anyone's vision.

Lu Boyuan stared into Jian Rong's eyes, which couldn't hide anything at all, and very lightly lifted an eyebrow. Then, just like he had in the video, he curved his eyes and smiled.

Yan: *clutches chest* even I felt the doki dokis translating this scene, rip Jian Rong



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ICDI Chapter 80: Little Orange is so blessed to have two dads.

Thanks to Anon for the Ko-fi~

Jian Rong felt like he had committed some atrocious offense, and on top of that, the other party involved had caught him by the scruff of his neck, red-handed.

He knew that right now, as long as he pretended to very naturally avert his gaze, everything would be fine. But in the end, Lu Boyuan was still the one who laughed and looked away first.

Right as Jian Rong stiffly rotated his head back around, Xiao Bai exited the video. “Why wasn’t Jian Rong in here ah.”

Yuan Qian nodded. “Seriously, they even included Doufu.”

Pine glanced at the date of posting. “The video’s from August last year, he hadn’t joined yet.”

Realization dawned on Xiao Bai. He turned off his computer and tried to stand up, only to sense that there was a person rooted behind him. He looked back, puzzled. “How come you’re still standing here? Weren’t you going to bed… why are your eyes so red?”

During his last game, Jian Rong had felt sleepy, so he had rubbed his eyes a few times.

He rapidly retreated a couple steps, giving Xiao Bai space to push out his chair. Jian Rong was about to open his mouth and explain when—

Lu Boyuan said, “Watched for too long.”

Just as Jian Rong was contemplating fleeing from the practice room at a speed of several hundred meters per second, Lu Boyuan mildly added, “Turn down your monitor brightness in the future, or else it’ll hurt your eyes.”

That night, Jian Rong had a dream.

In the dream, he was also in the break room from the video. After Lu Boyuan finished listening to what Xiao Bai said, he dipped his head and laughed for a while, before he looked up at Jian Rong. In a steady voice, he said, “You’ve been watching for too long.”

Apart from his family members, it was very rare for Jian Rong to clearly see someone’s face in a dream.

Jian Rong was vaguely aware that something wasn’t quite right about himself, but he didn’t dare to think too deeply about the specifics of it.

Fortunately, his training was packed lately, so he didn’t have that much time to ponder over other things.

Their next regular season match swiftly arrived. Before departing, Ding-*ge* gave them some pre-match instructions.

They were playing against WZWZ today, which could be considered a middle-tier team in the LPL.

“I’ll keep this short. There are some things that are inconvenient to say backstage.” Ding-*ge* cleared his throat. “Although we’re already guaranteed to enter the playoffs, you guys still have to play properly in the upcoming matches. We’ve never really lost to WZWZ even after so many practice matches with them, so there’s even less reason for us to lose in an official match. Today, let’s try our best to win early and get off work early. Don’t make any mistakes. That shouldn’t be a problem, right?”

The people sitting in the first few rows of the car loudly responded, “No problem.” Jian Rong was wearing a hat, and he lowered his head to chat with someone from the animal clinic.

Upon reading the incoming text, Jian Rong stared blankly at his phone for two seconds before he quietly muttered, “Incredible.”

“What is it.” Lu Boyuan glanced at him from the corner of his eyes.

Jian Rong rubbed his nose. “Little Orange committed a crime.”

“…” Lu Boyuan felt amused, and he asked accordingly, “Did he get in a fight?”

“No.” Jian Rong said, “He made someone’s stomach turn big[1].”

Lu Boyuan: “…”

Jian Rong clicked on the photo that the clinic had sent over. He cast his eyes down as he explained, “One night, it was raining heavily, so the clinic kindly let him stay overnight with this other female cat. Now the little

female cat's stomach is big… this female cat is so pretty, why did he have to do that?!"

As Jian Rong spoke, he handed his phone to Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan grabbed his hand and tilted the phone to look at it before quickly letting go. "She is pretty."

Their hands were only pressed together for a few seconds. There was a dazed expression on Jian Rong's face, and his hand remained frozen in midair for a short moment before he withdrew it. "Mn… you can tell just from looking that she's super expensive."

Lu Boyuan hummed. "Little Orange is also pretty."

Thinking of Little Orange's gradually fattening face in the recent photos, Jian Rong crinkled his brows, filled with disdain.

Lu Boyuan laughed. "What did the female cat's owner say?"

"Have to compensate with some money."

Ding-*ge* suddenly clapped from the passenger seat. "We're about to arrive, everyone wake up. There are fans here today, if you guys get out of the car looking tired again, watch out or those forum antis will directly pronounce your deaths—"

The three people in front instantly sat up straight. Jian Rong ducked his head, hurriedly replying.

[R-ong: Got it, I'll take responsibility. How much do I have to pay?]

[R-ong: You should buy some more canned cat food too and feed it to that female cat to supplement her nutrition. None for Little Orange.]

[Love Pets Animal Clinic: No need, Little Orange's dad deposited quite a bit of money last time, we can just deduct it straight from there.]

Jian Rong was startled.

Little Orange's… dad? Who?

Even if this guy really has a dad, shouldn't it be me?

[R-ong: What dad?]

[Love Pets Animal Clinic: Ah, I'm referring to the individual whose profile picture is a little teacup pig, just like yours. The WeChat name is R.]

[Love Pets Animal Clinic: I saw that the director's note for him was also Little Orange's dad. Is the note wrong? [laughing crying]]

[R-ong: …]

Jian Rong slanted his phone towards himself, as if he was afraid of someone catching sight of it.

[R-ong: It's right]

The customer service sister skillfully and amiably responded—

[Love Pets Animal Clinic: Haha, Little Orange is so blessed to have two dads.]

The car stopped at the stadium, and Little Orange's two dads got out of the car one after another.

As the match approached, the broadcast camera first focused on the commentators as usual.

Commentator A: "Soft is still a starter today, it seems like the team is very confident in Soft's strength."

"What are you thinking, if I were the coach, there's also no way I would've made Soft a substitute." Commentator B couldn't help but laugh. "They're not idiots, who would bench a player with mechanics like that? After all, you can develop teamwork, but natural talent is much more rare…"

Commentator A was surprised. "How come you're suddenly talking him up?"

Commentator B shook his head. "You probably haven't seen any of Soft's ranked games lately, have you."

The players took the stage. Commentator B looked at Jian Rong, who was holding his keyboard, and said breezily, "In any case, I saw them, and I even watched him play a few games in his stream… I won't go into further detail. Everyone knows his domestic server ID, those who want to know more can go search it up. Honestly, in my personal opinion, if nothing had gone wrong with Soft's health in the last match… he would've had an opportunity to create an advantage in the mid lane."

Commentator A interrupted him skeptically, "Enough, enough, that's all in the past, so there's no need to stir up drama again. Let's watch this game."

The livestream barrage began throwing shade before the match even started. Continuing from the rhythm of last week's match, they called Soft a "ranked game king," someone who was useless in five-man competitive gaming.

Now the barrage turned to flaming Commentator B, saying that he pulled in a useless newcomer to trample over Savior, and they also cursed TTC by claiming that they wouldn't last through the playoffs.

Not long after, countless "Soft dads" and TTC fans rushed to the scene of the affront. They flipped the table and commenced their counterattack.

As a result, before the commentators could even get going, a large portion of fans from both teams had already been blocked, leaving behind a clean and civilized stream environment for the water friends who sincerely wanted to watch the match…

The match started soon after.

Following Commentator B's forceful pre-match boost, at level 6 Jian Rong's Jayce beautifully predicted where the enemy was going to flash to. He closed in with a flash and tossed out a long-range electric orb, effortlessly getting first blood.

Solo killing the enemy mid laner in a competitive game was already a common occurrence for Soft, but the people watching the broadcast still couldn't resist energetically spamming "*666*."

WZWZ was evidently aware of Soft's weak point. Consequently, their mid laner exited the base at level 9 and headed straight for TTC's bot lane,

preparing to coordinate with his jungler to make some trouble.

At that moment, in the stream for Soft's POV, a mystical scene appeared—

There was the sound of a ping.

[TTC · Soft is asking for assistance.]

The barrage abruptly exploded.

[????]

[Am I seeing things?]

[The game bugged, waiting for a match pause.]

[What? So the dumbass did know that there was an assist me ping in LoL??]

[Several decades from now, as I sit in my rocking chair, my grandson says to me: Grandpa, Soft knows how to use the assist ping now. I chuckle and reply: Don't believe or spread rumors.]

In the team voice chat, Xiao Bai said, half-disbelievingly, "Can you really camp them? Their blue buff is already gone."

"I can." Jian Rong hid in the bushes next to WZWZ's blue buff. "Hurry up and come here."

Xiao Bai went over with Pine.

Ten seconds later, before WZWZ's bot lane could react, their mid laner and jungler were camped and killed by TTC's mid laner, ADC, and support. After

the kill, Lu Boyuan arrived just in time, and the four of them encircled WZWZ's bot lane. Jian Rong clumsily helped tank the last wave of the tower's damage for Xiao Bai, who was wailing out loud, and finished it off with a perfect tower dive.

Eighteen minutes in, Jian Rong went to the top lane with Lu Boyuan and Xiao Bai, and they greatly upped the tempo of the game, directly pushing two of the enemy's towers.

Twenty-six minutes in, Yuan Qian's Aatrox flashed and immediately hammered the enemy ADC to the point that his own mom wouldn't recognize him anymore, getting the kill without even having to use his ult. A second later, the other four team members destroyed WZWZ's Nexus.

Before those people who were fighting in the barrage could make it past their half hour ban limit, the first game had already ended.

Everyone thought that the first game went by too quickly, but nobody expected for the second game to be the real rocket booster.

There was one sole reason: WZWZ made a mistake in their pick/ban phase and released Jian Rong's LeBlanc, as well as Pine's Aphelios.

This round, Jian Rong no longer went to provide assistance.

Because he simply didn't need to.

WZWZ's mid laner was solo killed at level 4 and died again at level 6. Once he made it back to the lane, he no longer dared to leave his tower.

Fifteen minutes in, WZWZ realized that they couldn't allow Jian Rong to keep farming like this. Four of them surrounded him in the mid lane, and after confirming that he didn't have his flash or blink skills, the enemy support unhesitatingly flashed forward and used his ult to forcefully engage—unfortunately, Jian Rong's reaction speed was top-tier. He instantly used his Zhonya's Hourglass at full health.

WZWZ's four players anxiously waited for Zhonya's to finish, and their team chat was extremely tense.

"Support, daze him, don't let him escape!"

"Relax, I'm prepared…"

As Zhonya's disappeared, the support's Leona promptly followed up with a stun… and missed.

The support stared blankly as the system notification of his teammate's death sounded—their four-person encirclement failed, and their ADC was oneshotted by Soft.

WZWZ's remaining three members lifelessly watched LeBlanc flash into the jungle, disappearing into the underbrush without a second look back.

[@WZWZ's coach, you there? Who are you looking down on, releasing LeBlanc?]

[Damn damn damn, hurry up and replay that, *laozi* didn't see it clearly!!!]

[Under typical circumstances, when the dumbass picks those blasted assassins like Zed, Talon, and LeBlanc, if I can clearly tell how he got the kill the first time watching, that just means he wasn't in a good condition that day.]

At twenty-three minutes and forty-two seconds, TTC pushed WZWZ's Nexus, easily winning the second game. In the middle, Pine got a quadra kill, and Jian Rong's final score was 6/0/2.

…

After the match concluded, the MVP was inevitably and naturally given to Jian Rong.

The others sat in the break room, waiting for his post-match interview.

On TV, Jian Rong looked at the camera indifferently as he responded somewhat unenthusiastically to the host's questions. Without his sickly air from last week, this new eighteen-year-old mid laner's words were still as unrestrained as ever.

Ding-*ge* lowered his head, taking notes. "He's still not very used to providing assistance, the place he chose to camp in the first wave was too risky. You're the one who called him over to the top lane in the second wave, right?"

Lu Boyuan was watching the TV. "Mn."

Ding-*ge* nodded. "It's only been a few days, so this can be considered significant progress."

Yuan Qian propped up his head on his hand. "*Ai*, how come I feel like Xiao Rong is a bit more handsome today?"

Ding-*ge* didn't bother looking up. "I made him put on some makeup before going on."

Xiao Bai said, shocked, "Doesn't he hate it when other people touch his eyes? How did you convince him."

"They only filled in his eyebrows." Ding-*ge* paused for a moment. "I said if he did it, he would appear livelier during the MVP interview and could piss off those antis."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Yuan Qian ducked his head, scrolling through the messages that he had received during the match. "Nice, I knew this would happen… yet another person is asking me for Jian Rong's WeChat."

Lu Boyuan very slowly blinked once.

"Another?" Xiao Bai's hands were braced behind his head. "Who? Someone from my sister-in-law's best friends?"

Yuan Qian shook his head. "This time, it's a guy, a PUBG accompanying gamer. He said he wants to get to know Jian Rong and be friends with him."

Xiao Bai was delighted, and he joked, "Amazing, consuming both men and women. The same as my *ge*."

“Don’t talk nonsense.” There were LPL staff outside, so Ding-*ge* hastily interrupted them. “Girls are fine, but you can forget about the guys.”

Yuan Qian locked his phone. “What’s wrong with guys?”

Ding-*ge* lifted an eyebrow. “It’s one thing if he adds a girl on WeChat. Although I wouldn’t want him to start dating right away, since he just joined the team, I still can’t forcibly cut off his red string. But what’s the point of adding a guy? Did you all forget about how someone sold Xiao Lu’s WeChat contact before? There’s no point, sooner or later he’ll meet the people that he’s supposed to meet.”

Xiao Bai hooked an arm around Pine’s shoulders. “Likewise, can’t men also date other men.”

Even though Xiao Bai was slightly chubby, he had a smaller frame, and his fat was distributed very evenly so he didn’t seem bulky at all. On the contrary, as he leaned against Pine, who was quite a few kilograms lighter than him, it made Pine seem somewhat taller and broader in comparison.

In a fleeting moment of panic, Ding-*ge* actually couldn’t tell if Xiao Bai was kidding around or if he was genuinely coming out of the closet. Ding-*ge* only snapped out of it once he saw Xiao Bai knock against Pine’s shoulder, with a dumb smile on his face from start to finish.

Ding-*ge* rolled his eyes at him and said without thinking, “If Jian Rong really were to date a man, then there’s even less need for him to add someone else. To Xiao Lu, he…”

Ding-*ge* screeched to a stop mid-sentence.

No… what the hell was he even thinking about.

“Alright, let’s stop here.” Ding-*ge* made a time-out gesture with his hands. “Jian Rong is extremely straight. I did some research before he joined the team, he often played with female accompanying gamers back when he was streaming. Enough with these kinds of jokes…”

“How come he still isn’t back yet.” Lu Boyuan asked evenly as he stood up and picked up Jian Rong’s equipment bag, along with his own, with one hand.

“Ah?” Ding-*ge* turned to look at the TV. “The interview’s over?”

Yuan Qian nodded. “It’s been over for a while now.”

“Then he should be back soon.” Ding-*ge* checked the time. “How about you guys head to the car first, I’ll go find him.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t say anything. He slung Jian Rong’s equipment bag over his shoulder while he casually carried his own bag in one hand. After he walked out of the break room, he glanced in the direction of the stage entrance, and then stopped on the spot.

As the others exited, they couldn’t help but follow his line of sight and look over as well—

Their mid laner was currently surrounded by several men and women asking for his signature, including both employees and fans who had snuck backstage due to connections with staff.

Professional gamers' autographs weren't worth all that much; after all, they were people who you could interact and communicate with in streams, so there wasn't a strong sense of distance. Through the staff, it was possible to obtain most professional gamers' signatures.

Of course, it still wasn't easy to get autographs from teams like TTC or PUD.

However, Jian Rong didn't care about any of that. It was merely a matter of writing some letters in English, and there weren't a lot of people present either, so he hadn't refused.

Lu Boyuan saw a female fan flash a finger heart at Jian Rong.

When Jian Rong saw the hand gesture, he was startled at first. Then he heard the girl say, "Dumbass darling, Daddy loves you."

Jian Rong huffed out a laugh and handed the pen back to her. "Get lost, get lost."

After bidding farewell to the fans, Jian Rong turned around and saw that his teammates were waiting for him at the entrance to their break room.

Jian Rong: "Just a moment, I'll go in to get my equipment bag…"

Yuan Qian stopped him. "Captain already got it for you."

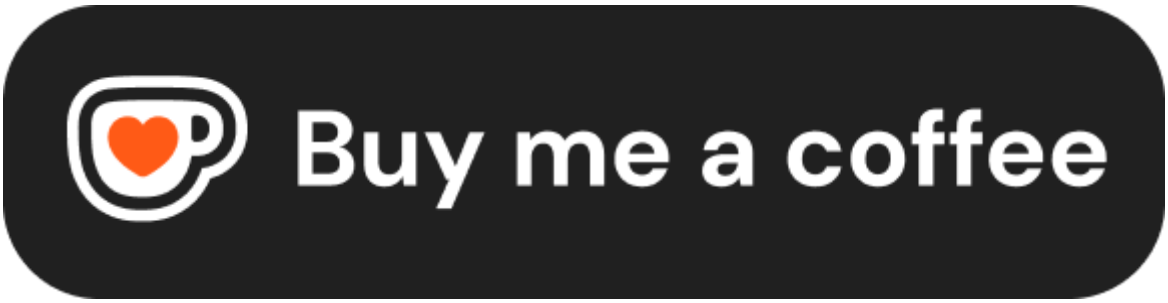
Jian Rong froze briefly. He turned and scanned the crowd, but he didn't spot Lu Boyuan. "Where is he?"

"He went to the car already." Ding-*ge* said, "Let's go."

Translation Notes

1. *Little Orange got a cat pregnant lol* ^

Wei: LBY is drinking vinegar, Ding-*ge* is becoming self-aware... so many things happening LOL



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ICDI Chapter 81: Do you have a guy that you like?

Thank you to Kitty and VGCGumi for the Ko-fis~

When Jian Rong got in the car, Lu Boyuan was resting with his eyes closed.

Jian Rong braced a hand against the window and slowly shifted towards the inside seat. Right as he straddled one foot across, Lu Boyuan extended his legs, and their calves pressed together through their pants.

Lu Boyuan opened his eyes and looked at him.

A car divided up into three rows would still be crowded no matter how spacious it was; to top it off, they were two grown men.

Jian Rong cast his eyes down. "…did I wake you?"

Lu Boyuan swept a glance at Jian Rong's hat. It was the one that came with TTC's uniform, and it had the team's crown logo printed on it. The only thing was, it didn't have Lu Boyuan's signature.

Lu Boyuan withdrew his legs. "I wasn't asleep."

Their match ended early today, so the auntie hadn't started preparing dinner yet by the time they got back to the base. After they lost the previous match, Xiao Bai had restrained himself for a week; as a result, he instantly started streaming the moment he sat down in the practice room.

"I've missed you all so much!

“Did everyone watch the match today? Wasn’t my flash-hook-prediction awesome?

“Why didn’t I stream this past week—what do you think? It’s not like I have our mid laner’s big shot energy.”

Jian Rong was used to being cued and didn’t react at all. He lowered his head and turned on his own computer.

The evening after a match, everyone was relatively relaxed. Xiao Bai’s voice was lazy as he leisurely pulled up the game. “Right, right? I’ve lost weight from working too hard.

“Last week’s practice was truly… ruthless and brutal. I suppose that’s the price of losing a match.

“How come I’m now ranked in the top 400 on the domestic server? …damn, it’s because our mid laner has been acting crazy recently. He’s been constantly forcing me, P-baby, or Qian-*ge* to duo queue with him.

“He’s helping you climb, and you aren’t even happy… I am happy, of course I’m happy, but doesn’t there need to be a work-rest balance?! Do you know that I duo queued with him for a total of thirteen hours over two days! Thirteen hours!! Apart from when we were in our practice matches, we spent all our remaining time together! I feel sick from seeing his ID so much!!” Xiao Bai crumbled here. “He was basically grabbing my freaking hair and forcing me to climb with him!!

“What’s he like when he’s duo queueing with the others? It’s not too bad with Qian-*ge*, Qian-*ge* can strike up a conversation with anyone. When Jian

Rong went to the top lane to provide assistance, not only did he get the kill, he also stole a bunch of minions without Qian-*ge* confronting him over it.

"With Pine… I'm not gonna say anything, it's too frightening. The day the two of them duo queued together, I felt like the entire world was silent. Nobody spoke, it was like they were two strangers matched together on the same team, with no voice chat or the ability to type either. The scariest part is that they practiced from one in the afternoon to one in the morning, before they each wordlessly ate a cup of instant noodles and then continued queueing, as if the first one to sleep would become the loser—

"With my *ge*?" Xiao Bai paused. "Hm, it seems like he didn't queue with my *ge*."

It was as if Xiao Bai's livestream room was TTC's official livestream. When Xiao Bai was the only one streaming, the five members' fans basically all gathered in his room.

From the corner of his vision, Jian Rong saw that Xiao Bai's barrage was densely packed, and he also spotted his and Lu Boyuan's IDs interspersed throughout.

Jian Rong's in-game party interface was open for quite a while. He didn't invite anyone, nor did he solo queue.

He hadn't duo queued with Lu Boyuan for almost a week now.

Which was funny, if he thought about it. Before, Jian Rong used to think that duo queueing was very troublesome. After all, it wasn't as if he needed

someone else to carry him.

But recently, he really wanted to play games with Lu Boyuan. Even if he had to fill in as a support, Jian Rong felt like it wouldn't be a big deal.

They were done with the match, and they had also won, so it was fine if they didn't practice tonight.

Then, did that mean that he… could invite Lu Boyuan to play a few ranked games with him?

Jian Rong silently ducked his head and unlocked his phone. Right as he located the little teacup pig profile picture on his contact list, someone pushed open the practice room door.

Jian Rong glanced behind him. Slightly startled by what he saw, he subconsciously blocked his phone screen with his hand.

Lu Boyuan had changed into a black sweatshirt, jeans, and athletic shoes. His hair was freshly washed but not dried; no matter how messy it was, it still looked stylish on Lu Boyuan.

Naturally, Lu Boyuan wasn't interested in peeping at other people's phone screens. He walked over to his own desk and unplugged his phone, which he had been charging for some time.

Though Lu Boyuan only appeared in the stream for a few short seconds, the barrage still exploded.

Xiao Bai turned off his mic and looked back to ask, "Going out, *ge*?"

Lu Boyuan said, “Mn.”

“Then should we order your portion of tonight’s midnight snacks?”

“No need, you guys go ahead.” Lu Boyuan skimmed his gaze over the party interface on Jian Rong’s monitor before quickly averting his eyes. “I’m leaving now.”

After Lu Boyuan left, Jian Rong lowered his head and closed the chat that he had just opened.

Xiao Bai unmuted himself. “Where’s my *ge* going? Is that something I can tell you all? How come he can go out during a competitive season… it’s a competitive season, not prison, why can’t he go out? We don’t have any practice matches tonight, what’s the problem with taking a break once you’ve met your daily practice quota.”

As Xiao Bai was speaking, someone suddenly patted his arm. He turned his head. “What is it?”

Jian Rong said expressionlessly, “I’ll carry you up to Challenger.”

Xiao Bai sucked in a deep breath. “Actually, I’m not too fixated on the idea of Challenger. If I get up there, then I’ll just have to worry endlessly about my points every single day out of the fear of being surpassed. Grandmaster is quite fun to play in, the competition is low, the atmosphere is light, I really like it…”

Jian Rong: “Get in the party.”

Xiao Bai: “Okay.”

—

In a KTV[1] near the river, the sound of pleasant and melodious singing came from a medium-sized private room.

Several delicately and beautifully dressed women sat near the song station, chatting, while the men sat on the other side, smoking and drinking.

Lu Boyuan sat in the middle of the men, quietly listening to them talk big about themselves. There was an unlit cigarette in his mouth.

XIU frowned and regarded him with disdain. “Putting a cigarette in your mouth but not lighting it, isn’t that just a waste.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Weren’t you the one who made me take it? Constantly wanting to drag me into getting penalized, what are you trying to do.”

XIU said, “It’s not like Ding-*ge* will find out if you smoke here, all you have to do is remember to change out your jacket when you go back.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t reply. He remembered how Jian Rong had insisted on taking the blame for him last time while wearing his jacket.

Someone sitting on the side said, “Oh right, Lu-*ge*, we watched your match today together at a restaurant. Your team’s new mid laner isn’t bad! His mechanics are pretty awesome, it feels a bit similar to when you first started your career.”

“Don’t talk about him, last year that mid laner was still in the same industry as me.” Another person exhaled a mouthful of smoke. “I had a gift PK with him, and I even lost. What a waste of my four years playing in the LPL, the moment I retired, my fans abandoned me just like that.”

“No no no. Although that little bluenette is quite strong, he still falls a tad short of Lu-*ge* compared to back when he debuted…”

“Falls short how?” There was a cigarette between Lu Boyuan’s teeth, so his speech was a little indistinct. “If he were in the LSPL, he could also become the champion.”

That person sensed something from his words. “It seems like you have a fairly good relationship with that new mid laner?”

XIU breathed out smoke. “It’s far more than just ‘good’…”

Lu Boyuan lazily interrupted, “Talk about something else.”

“Sure.” Someone said, “I called it last year: at this year’s get-together, my God Lu is definitely still gonna be single.”

Lu Boyuan: “…”

“Isn’t that obvious? Let’s continue this discussion whenever he actually retires too. As for while he’s still playing, not a chance.”

XIU chuckled. “How does he not have a chance? With one lift of my God Lu’s hand, so many fans would love to rush up.”

“I’m not talking about that.” Their friend waved his hand. “It’s a problem with himself. He’s more like an old monk than a professional gamer, no emotions or desires, who knows if he can return to this mundane world once he retires.”

Lu Boyuan had no desire to be a monk.

He asked, “Can we stop talking about me? What do I have to do to block your mouths?”

“That’s simple.” The friend lifted his glass. “Play some dice, drink some alcohol. Don’t worry, it’s beer, with your tolerance you won’t get drunk.”

Never mind beer, even if he were to mix red and white wine, Lu Boyuan could still hang in there for quite a while.

After downing a few glasses, the group of people promptly went to hug their girlfriends and sing with them.

XIU sat down next to him. “Why didn’t you bring Soft with you?”

Lu Boyuan didn’t look at him. “Did you bring Savior?”

“That’s not the same thing, Savior and I are teammates, you and Soft…”

“Are also teammates.”

“…”

XIU glanced at him in astonishment. “Whaddya mean? Don’t you like him? Did I misunderstand?”

Lu Boyuan went silent for two seconds before he bent over, picked up a cigarette from the table, and lit it.

At first, it had been very vague.

For some inexplicable reason, he had simply wanted to treat him well, play games with him, buy shoes and skins for him, and bring him home to celebrate the Lunar New Year together.

Lu Boyuan had considered before whether it was merely because Jian Rong was young—but in reality, there were plenty of trainees who were even younger than him. Fifteen- and sixteen-year-old kids were all over the place in the trainee team.

Up until that night, when he realized that there was absolutely no way he could sleep together with Jian Rong.

Lu Boyuan sucked in a mouthful of smoke. “Just because I like someone, they have to like me back?”

XIU said, “Well, certainly not.”

“…”

Seeing his speechlessness, XIU coughed. “But even if he doesn’t like you, you can still pursue him.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t respond.

It was hardly that easy.

First of all, disregarding the fact that they were on the same team and could be considered colleagues of some sort, and also ignoring that Jian Rong had just come of age and probably hadn't given any of this a second thought…

He hadn't even figured out if Jian Rong was straight or not.

Every time he looked at Lu Boyuan, his eyes burned brighter than anyone else's.

And yet, he had also played with female accompanying gamers before, and when a female fan had given him a finger heart, he had smiled at her and laughed happily.

Thinking of that, Lu Boyuan shook the ashes off his cigarette expressionlessly.

After Jian Rong and Xiao Bai duo queued together for three hours straight, Ding-*ge* came back with midnight snacks.

They always received very luxurious midnight snacks following every match they won, but Jian Rong ate his share somewhat absent-mindedly.

It was twelve, and Lu Boyuan still hadn't returned yet.

Even if he came back later, Jian Rong would feel bad making Lu Boyuan queue with him at this hour.

"It's this late already, my *ge* still isn't back?"

As someone else voiced his own thoughts exactly, Jian Rong wordlessly pricked up his ears.

Ding-*ge* glanced at the time. “Let me call and ask.”

Ding-*ge*’s call only lasted two minutes. After he hung up, he said, “He’s out drinking. It’s fine, you guys eat, I’ll wash my hands and then head over to pick him up.”

Pine asked, “How are you going to get him?”

Ding-*ge* was startled. “By driving, how else? Should I walk over and carry him back?”

Pine apathetically pointed at the Tsingtao beer that Ding-*ge* had just opened to accompany the crayfish.

Ding-*ge* went quiet for a moment. “I’ll give someone a call and ask them to pick him up…”

“I’ll go.”

Ding-*ge* stared blankly at Jian Rong and repeated, “You’re gonna walk over and carry him back?”

“I’ll take a taxi.” Jian Rong said, “The base is really stuffy, I can use the chance to go out for a walk.”

Ding-*ge* didn’t feel too reassured. “From his voice, he sounded a bit drunk, are you able to support him?”

Jian Rong peeled off his plastic gloves and went upstairs to grab his coat. His words traveled back to the living room. "—I can, I'm very strong."

Twenty minutes later, the KTV employee led Jian Rong to the private room that Ding-*ge* had told him the number of.

Under Ding-*ge*'s orders, Jian Rong had covered himself up tightly with a mask and a hat, making him look like someone here to cause trouble as he stood in the doorway of the room.

The men and women in the private room looked at him in confusion, and Jian Rong also looked back at them. A few of the men seemed familiar; as for the women… he didn't know any of them.

But they were all extremely beautiful.

XIU was the first one to snap out of it. He used his elbow to nudge Lu Boyuan, who was sitting next to him with his head lowered, drinking alcohol. "…the kid's here."

Lu Boyuan sat in the center of the group, leisurely slouched back against the sofa with his legs sprawled open very carelessly.

He lifted his eyes and calmly met Jian Rong's gaze for a few seconds before he said to the person beside him, "Make some room."

The instant Jian Rong took off his mask and hat, he was recognized.

"Huh, little bluenette."

XIU corrected, "He's got a name, it's not little bluenette."

The person flapped his hand. “The name’s not important, I remember his LeBlanc.”

Although Jian Rong felt like some of these people looked very familiar, he momentarily couldn’t recall who they were.

“UU, Shanyang, Yumijuan[2].” Lu Boyuan’s voice was a little husky as he introduced them to Jian Rong. “All retired pro players.”

XIU added, “They all used to be in PUD, we knew each other from before we even started playing competitively. Later on, only your captain went over to TTC by himself.”

“I’ve been retired for too long, and I’ve also become a lot more handsome, so it’s normal for you not to recognize me.” UU glanced at Lu Boyuan. “Not gonna formally introduce him to us?”

Jian Rong was about to introduce himself when someone suddenly gripped his shoulder very gently.

Lu Boyuan had just been holding a bottle of beer, so his palm was slightly chilly.

“Soft, Jian Rong, my team’s new mid laner.”

“Jian Rong, sounds nice.” UU placed a glass down in front of Jian Rong. “Come on, let’s drink together.”

Lu Boyuan said, “He’s not drinking.”

“Why? Underage?”

Jian Rong instantly said, “I’m of age.”

“His alcohol tolerance isn’t good, he’s not allowed to drink.” Lu Boyuan checked the time. “How long do we have the room for?”

“We still have two hours, there’s no rush. Stay for another ten minutes, you can leave after we eat XIU’s birthday cake.”

Lu Boyuan murmured, “Alright.”

XIU cursed good-naturedly, “You bastards, it’s already been a week since my birthday.”

Jian Rong sat next to Lu Boyuan, the “*his alcohol tolerance isn’t good*” line still floating through his mind.

Lu Boyuan’s hands were braced against his thighs as he leaned forward a bit to play dice with them. The music was too loud in the room, forcing the others to shout out numbers to the point that their faces turned red; only Lu Boyuan never spoke and used his fingers to casually represent the number he was calling.

Once again, Jian Rong remembered the stupid things he had done the last time he got drunk, and he leaned back against the sofa to ruffle his hair.

UU lost another round, and he swore as he handed Lu Boyuan a cigarette, which was declined.

“Now that the team’s newcomer is here, you pretend to be well-behaved?”

Lu Boyuan didn't answer as he placed the cup back over the dice. "Last round."

Lu Boyuan was the one who had to drink in the last round. After drinking, he tossed the dice cup to the side and said he wasn't going to play anymore.

As a result, these grown men went to steal the microphones from the girls.

Men's voices always seemed louder than women's. UU turned up the song volume and instantly started performing a rap with XIU that nobody could understand.

The lighting in the private room was dim. Enduring the ravaging of his ears, Lu Boyuan glanced to his side.

Jian Rong had on a very thin coat, with the same casual clothing he was wearing earlier at the base underneath it. He had stuck both hands in his pockets and was sitting quite obediently.

Right as Lu Boyuan was about to ask how Jian Rong had persuaded Ding-*ge* to let him come out and get Lu Boyuan, he saw Jian Rong suddenly peek to the left and right. After ensuring that nobody was looking in their direction, he furtively pulled out something from his pocket.

Before Lu Boyuan could see what it was, Jian Rong tugged lightly at his hand, which was resting against the sofa, and placed the object onto his palm amidst the darkness.

It was a carton of boxed milk.

Lu Boyuan was slightly startled. Jian Rong leaned a little closer to him and said softly, “I didn’t know there were this many people here, I only bought one.”

Lu Boyuan held the boxed milk and raised an eyebrow. “So you even know this.”

“Ding-*ge* told me before I left, he said it’s good for your stomach to drink this after having alcohol.” When Lu Boyuan didn’t budge, Jian Rong urged quietly, “Take a few sips.”

Lu Boyuan cast his eyes down and felt too lazy to move. “It’s dark in here, I’ll do it outside.”

Jian Rong took back the milk, ripped open the straw, and accurately poked it into the carton before returning the milk to Lu Boyuan. “Okay, you should drink some.”

Lu Boyuan stared at the straw for several seconds before he picked up the milk and took a big sip.

Jian Rong was satisfied.

They sat there for a while longer before he suddenly recalled something else. “Oh right, about Little Orange…”

XIU stood next to the microphone stand, shaking his head as he lifted one hand high in the air and waved it about wildly. “AYO everybody slam dunking on your head[3]!!”

Lu Boyuan: “Mn?”

Jian Rong: “Little Orange…”

XIU’s head bobbed up and down. “No fly! I’m simply not an idol!!”

Jian Rong: “…”

He resisted the urge to smash the microphone and subconsciously leaned closer to Lu Boyuan.

There was the scent of tobacco on Lu Boyuan’s body. Jian Rong didn’t like secondhand smoke, nor did he like the smell of cigarette smoke, but the scent on Lu Boyuan always seemed different compared to that of other people who smoked.

It was very light, and it also smelled very nice.

Jian Rong composed himself. “—I said, the money that you spent on Little Orange, I transferred it back to you.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t say anything.

Jian Rong thought that he still wasn’t able to hear him, so he shifted forward a bit more. “You put too much money in for Little Orange, he…”

Lu Boyuan turned his head, and Jian Rong’s voice came to an abrupt halt.

Lu Boyuan was in a mildly tipsy state. His eyelashes drooped down, and his eyes looked as deep as a lake.

Only then did Jian Rong realize that they were too close to each other.

Close to the point that so long as either one of them moved forward, their noses would brush together.

XIU was still wailing and howling.

Lu Boyuan's voice was low. "What about him?"

There was a warmth in Lu Boyuan's exhale. Jian Rong blinked a few times and said, "He's just a little mixed-breed cat, he doesn't need that much money."

Lu Boyuan didn't speak.

Jian Rong felt as if he was on the verge of drowning in the lake. He truly couldn't bear Lu Boyuan looking at him like this.

Jian Rong averted his eyes and said as naturally as possible, "Also, if he eats canned food for every meal, it really is easy for him to get fat, and then he won't be able to win against the stray cats outside…"

"Jian Rong." Lu Boyuan suddenly called his name.

"Mn?"

Lu Boyuan spoke very slowly. "You're eighteen now, have you ever liked a girl before?"

Jian Rong was briefly surprised, but he replied swiftly, "I haven't."

"Not a single one?" Lu Boyuan paused for a moment. "In senior high, junior high, primary school, kindergarten…"

“No, not a single one.”

Lu Boyuan nodded.

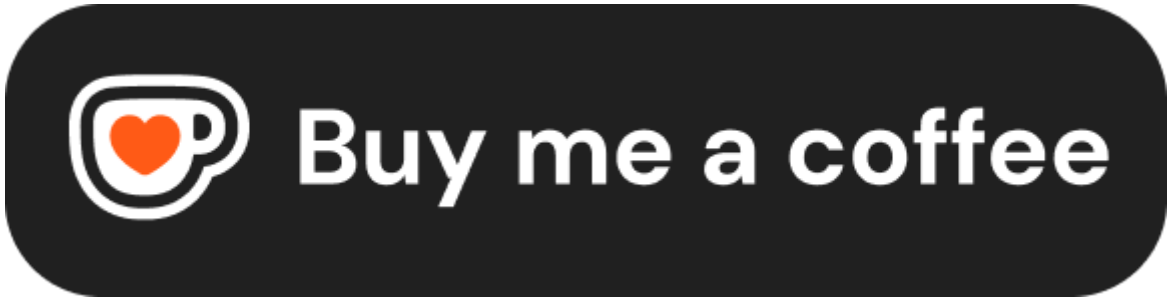
“Then what about guys.”

For an instant, Jian Rong’s mind went blank, and he looked at Lu Boyuan with panicked and guilty eyes.

Lu Boyuan continued to watch him. His voice was deep, and it slammed into Jian Rong’s ears, clearer than any other sound in the room. “Kindergarten, primary school, junior high, senior high, right now… do you have a guy that you like?”

Translation Notes

1. *Karaoke bar* ^
2. *Again with the noun names – Shanyang = mountain goat, Yumijuan = taco* ^
3. *He’s singing this rap song, just imagine this in this background lmao…* ^



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ICDI Chapter 82: I like you.

XIU was still singing the song that Jian Rong couldn't understand a single word of.

In order to respond to Ding-*ge*'s messages, Jian Rong had been holding his phone the entire time. If his grip was any stronger, his phone would probably explode from how hard he was squeezing it.

—*I've been found out*.

When that thought popped up, Jian Rong gave himself a scare.

XIU let out another "*slam dunking on your head*," which was so loud the neighboring room could probably hear it and was about to come over waving a knife, dragging Jian Rong out of his thoughts.

Jian Rong questioned, "…why are you asking that."

His guilty conscience reached its peak, and he unconsciously kept blinking as he spoke.

Lu Boyuan didn't hear him. He tilted his head a bit towards Jian Rong, indicating for him to say it again.

Jian Rong could smell the scent of alcohol on Lu Boyuan. Together with the tobacco, it combined into a different sort of heart-throbbing fragrance.

Jian Rong froze completely and didn't move at all. "I said… why are you asking that, does Ding-*ge* need – need to record it? Afraid that I'm going to

start dating early?"

Then, he heard Lu Boyuan let out a muffled laugh, heavy and low, suppressing XIU's incongruous rapping.

Maintaining that same distance, Lu Boyuan lifted his chin and said in Jian Rong's ear, "I'm the one who wants to know."

A second later, he spoke again. "You're eighteen, it doesn't count as dating early."

Simultaneously as Jian Rong's brain crashed, he didn't forget to curse out his stream's water friends in his mind. They were constantly brainwashing him with '*don't date early, it'll affect your career*,' making it so that at a freaking critical moment like this, he was still preoccupied with BS about dating early or not.

Because of Jian Rong's appearance, he frequently received comments calling him effeminate or gay while he was streaming. Each time, he would unhesitatingly toss out an "*I'm your dad*."

But right now, not only was he unable to say a single word denying it, he also freaked out. The feeling of being caught peeking at Lu Boyuan back at the base when they were watching whatever butterflies-inducing video returned with a vengeance.

At the time, he had indeed been caught peeking.

Then what about this time? This time, he hadn't done anything at all, so how come he still had this misperception that Lu Boyuan had him seized by

the collar……

Lu Boyuan set down his glass. It was an extremely mundane gesture, but in Jian Rong's guilty eyes, it seemed like a prompt for him to hurry up.

As a result, Jian Rong's mind spun as he grew flustered, and he said, completely irrelevantly, "What's the reason for asking this? Do you discriminate against gay people?"

Two seconds later, Jian Rong thought, *What kind of nonsense question did I just ask, I might as well slap myself three times in punishment.*

Seeing Lu Boyuan's slightly startled expression, Jian Rong then felt like three slaps wouldn't be enough to settle this matter.

Lu Boyuan was indeed momentarily taken aback, but he quickly recovered.

He said, "I discriminate against myself?"

Jian Rong: "……"

Oh no.

I think I couldn't quite hear him.

I definitely misheard him, or I missed something.

Jian Rong mumbled, "…what'd you say?"

XIU overpowered Jian Rong's muttering, and Lu Boyuan furrowed his brows.

Consequently, Jian Rong increased the volume of his voice and asked again, “What did you say—”

The moment before he spoke, the music cut off, and a woman sitting not too far from Jian Rong just happened to pick up and turn on a microphone —

“Did you say—

“You say—

“Say—”

Jian Rong’s voice echoed around the private room for a long time.

Everyone in the room turned to look at him. Jian Rong stared at Lu Boyuan’s profile and decided that after he left this KTV, he was going to immediately take a taxi over to Huangpu River.

UU, who had turned off the song without permission, was the first to pull himself together. He swore at the person next to the microphone stand, “Can you freaking sing something that other people can understand?”

XIU gripped his microphone. “…what do you know, this is called hip hop!!”

“What’re you so damn hyped about. When other people rap, it’s hip hop, but when you do it, you’re just a reader—your pronunciation isn’t even accurate.”

XIU grumbled as he put down the microphone. A song with a soothing, light intro started playing soon after, and everyone abruptly discovered

that their ears felt much more comfortable now.

Except for Jian Rong.

At that current moment, if someone were to place an unlit cigarette on his ear, perhaps it would be able to instantly ignite.

XIU walked straight towards them and also dragged over UU when he passed him. He kept grousing to himself, "*I've noticed that when I'm with you, bastard, I just can't have a good chat or sing a song, tonight if I don't drink you under the table I won't be able to focus on my upcoming match.*"

Right before XIU and UU reached them, Lu Boyuan repeated his words from earlier in greater detail.

"I said, I like guys." He said, "Right now."

Before Jian Rong could free himself from his stupefied state, XIU sat down on the stool next to Lu Boyuan.

XIU poured himself a glass of alcohol. "Holy shit, when I glanced over just now, I thought that you two were kissing."

Jian Rong: "……"

UU: "?"

Lu Boyuan retreated back to his original position.

Even so, Jian Rong still felt like they were too close to each other. He tugged his disheveled coat over his chest, afraid that Lu Boyuan could hear

the sound of his heartbeat.

UU joked, “Are you crazy, why would two men be kissing?”

Realizing that he had accidentally let something slip out, XIU cleared his throat. “Why can’t two men kiss? Are you some old-fashioned elder? How come that cake still isn’t here yet, we’ve been waiting forever.”

“It’s the weekend, there’s a lot of guests, it even takes a long time for an attendant to come over. Wait a little longer, what’s the rush?” UU smiled at the person behind Lu Boyuan. “Soft, don’t hold back. If you can’t drink, you can still sing. Go pick a song, you can queue it straight to the top.”

Jian Rong was glad that the lighting in the room was dim.

He ducked his head and hid his face as he said vaguely, “No need, I can’t sing.”

UU lifted an eyebrow. “Weren’t you a streamer before? You don’t know how to sing?”

“It’s not like he was relying on singing to get more fans.” XIU topped up UU’s glass. “Stop messing around, drink up.”

More alcohol was poured into Lu Boyuan’s glass as well. He didn’t say anything as he picked it up and bumped it against XIU’s cup.

With his head lowered, Jian Rong swiftly calmed down.

If Lu Boyuan liked guys, which… guy did he like.

At first, Jian Rong thought that it was himself.

But after Lu Boyuan leaned back and tacitly bumped glasses with XIU… he felt like he was taking it too much for granted.

Nearly everyone in their industry was male. Newcomers, trainees, even their team's substitute jungler, they were all Lu Boyuan's fanboys. The LPL's famous and renowned players were acquainted with Lu Boyuan too, and there were also quite a few male celebrities who wanted to team up with him.

Lu Boyuan could have possibly taken a liking to any one of them.

What's more, Lu Boyuan had consumed alcohol and appeared to be a little drunk, so it wasn't weird for him to suddenly come out of the closet to Jian Rong either.

Jian Rong's pulse was still going fast, but his expression had already settled down entirely. Taking advantage of when Lu Boyuan was talking to XIU, he reached up and forcefully rubbed his face.

XIU changed the subject. "Oh right. After we finished playing against you guys last week, Savior kept talking about your mid laner."

His voice wasn't loud, but because the music was currently relaxed, Jian Rong could still hear him.

Jian Rong was in a state of deep contemplation and wasn't listening too closely, so he didn't notice that XIU had worded it as "*your mid laner*."

Lu Boyuan took a sip from his drink. “Talking about what?”

“He said that he’s definitely gonna win the lane next time.”

XIU was already fully prepared to receive Jian Rong’s ridicule, but he didn’t expect the person in question to stare blankly off into the distance, zoning out, without even giving a sneer in reply.

“He’s imagining things.”

XIU was dumbfounded, and he looked at Lu Boyuan. “What?”

The door opened. A KTV employee entered, pushing a cake on a cart that had two balloons attached to it.

“Just wait for the playoffs.” Lu Boyuan patted his shoulder. “Go blow out your candles.”

XIU: “…”

Fucking hell, Lu Boyuan’s pat gave him a type of “*finish this last meal so I can send you on your way*” feeling.

After the candles were blown out, Jian Rong was handed a slice of cake. He ate the cherry that was on top of the cream but didn’t really touch the cake itself.

He listened to Lu Boyuan chat with UU and the rest about things that had happened in the past, slowly absorbing new information—

The private room was filled with the LPL's early pro players; apart from Lu Boyuan and XIU, the rest had retired already. They all knew each other from way back when, and they used to game together every day in an illegal internet cafe. At the time, Lu Boyuan was fighting with his father, so he had basically lived at the internet cafe…

Stunned, Jian Rong instantly snapped out of his thoughts.

UU was in the middle of a rousing retelling. "Every day, when I went back home to sleep, he was playing ranked in the internet cafe. When I woke up, he was still playing ranked at the internet cafe. What's the difference between you and those top students who study on the sly?"

Lu Boyuan scoffed. "If I wanted to practice in secret, as if you'd be able to find out?"

"Speaking of which, back when his dad rushed over to the internet cafe, he also brought a few people in suits with him. That display of force really gave me a scare."

"Damn, I remember that, there was a whole row of luxury cars parked outside that little rundown illegal internet cafe. Everyone on the street stopped to look!"

"If my family's financial situation was like that, like hell I'd play games…"

Jian Rong grew more and more startled as he listened.

He knew that Lu Boyuan's family was well-off. From one glance, it was clear that Papa and Mama Lu were both highly accomplished intellectuals, but…

Lu Boyuan had fallen out with his family before?

As he listened with his head lowered, a cherry stained with cream was placed onto his cake plate.

Lu Boyuan continued to chat with his close friends. After giving away his cherry, he put down his cake. “That’s enough, is there nothing else to talk about?”

Once they finished eating their cake, Lu Boyuan ignored UU’s pleas to stay and left with Jian Rong.

There were many taxis outside of the KTV, and they randomly got in one. Fortunately, they encountered a driver who didn’t want to speak.

Jian Rong stared out the window, the same question as before still spinning in circles around his mind.

Who exactly did Lu Boyuan like.

Lu Boyuan cracked open the window a bit. When the night wind blew inside, the scent of alcohol clinging to him floated over to Jian Rong’s side.

Lu Boyuan was on a call with Ding-*ge*, who didn’t understand how he had gradually heard less and less from Jian Rong after letting him go pick up Lu Boyuan. His texts remained unread, his calls were ignored, he was almost about to call the fucking police.

Lu Boyuan swept a glance at Jian Rong, who was sitting next to him, lost in thought. He started to wonder: of what he had said in the private room, just

how much did this person actually hear.

“He’s fine.

“Why would I not be fine.

“I didn’t drink that much, I’m not drunk, we’re on our way back now.”

…

At the base, he scanned his QR code and paid the driver.

Right as Lu Boyuan placed one foot out of the car.

“Who is it that you like…”

Jian Rong couldn’t help himself.

He wanted to know much too badly. Since leaving the KTV, he had restrained himself until now, but he truly couldn’t hold back any longer.

He kept getting the feeling that if he didn’t get to the bottom of this matter in one go, then he wouldn’t be able to freaking sleep tonight, tomorrow night, or any night from now on.

Jian Rong held the door open for Lu Boyuan with one hand, while he raised his other hand in a pledge. “I definitely won’t tell anyone. If I do, I’ll lose all my games, I won’t be able to out-flame the water friends, I’ll be slaughtered when laning…”

Lu Boyuan got out of the car, closed the door, and then grabbed Jian Rong’s wrist.

He pulled Jian Rong over to a shadow to the right of a street lamp.

Jian Rong thought that Lu Boyuan felt he was being too nosy. “Of course, it’s also fine if you don’t want to tell me.”

Lu Boyuan laughed when he heard that, and he let go of Jian Rong’s hand.

“It seems like I’m the one who asked you this question first, it’s only fair that I give an answer for an answer.”

Jian Rong: “…”

After a very long time, he abruptly replied, “I… didn’t like anyone in kindergarten, or in primary school, or in junior high, or in senior high.”

At this point, Jian Rong reached up and tousled his hair, sinking into a silence.

Lu Boyuan quietly waited for him to finish.

Jian Rong discovered that even if Lu Boyuan didn’t do anything except stand in front of him and gaze down at him, he still felt like he was about to fucking explode from nervousness.

“Right now…” Jian Rong shut his eyes. “Right now, it… seems that, there’s someone that I like…”

Lu Boyuan asked, “Who.”

It was difficult for Jian Rong to even breathe, but he was never one to put himself at a disadvantage. “It’s only fair that I give an answer for an answer

__"

From behind them, there was an ear-piercing *creak*—

"Damn! I was drying my underwear on the balcony, and when I glanced down from up there, I thought I saw you two!" Xiao Bai poked his head out from the base's gate and asked with concern, "Why aren't you guys coming in? It's so cold out here."

Jian Rong: "……"

I'm going to murder a support.

Why did I have to flash and save this dumbass in our second to last ranked game tonight???

If you're gonna dry your underwear, then dry your underwear, what the hell are you looking all over the place for????

You're already done with practice at this hour? Do you think you performed extremely well during today's match?????????

The lighting was too dim, so Xiao Bai couldn't clearly see the fury and anguish in their mid laner's eyes. Receiving no response from either person, Xiao Bai pulled open the gate and asked, "Are you not coming inside? Ding-*ge*'s been waiting for you two for a long time."

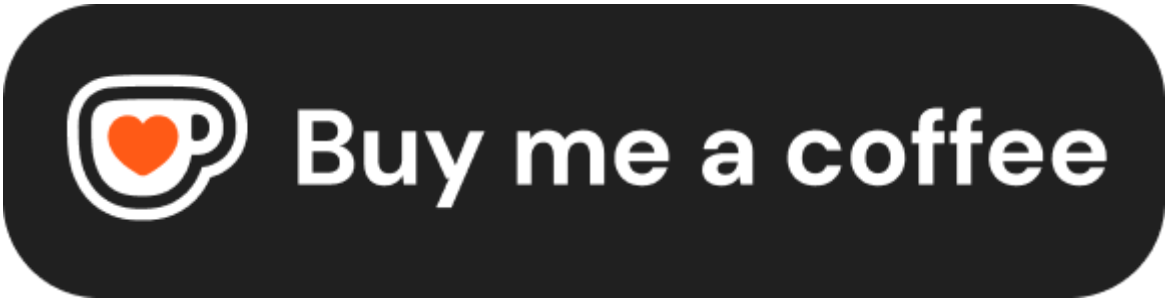
Jian Rong's fists clenched and then unclenched, unclenched and then clenched.

Until his hand was held by someone.

At an angle where Xiao Bai couldn't see, Lu Boyuan extended his hand, and their fingers tangled together for a few brief seconds.

"You."

Lu Boyuan's voice was very soft, and it contained a huskiness that came from drinking. "I like you."



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ICDI Chapter 83: .

Normally, Xiao Bai wasn't so bored and idle that he would head over to the front door to check out what was going on. The reason he came down this time… was because he thought he saw a ghost.

In the dead of the night, there were very few pedestrians. With the two of them standing there, it truly was quite frightening, which was why he ended up coming out, dragging Pine with him. At that moment, Pine was standing right behind him.

Their two late-to-return teammates passed through the large iron gate. Xiao Bai walked next to Jian Rong, and upon seeing his preoccupied expression, Xiao Bai asked in a whisper, "What were you and my *ge* talking about just now?"

Jian Rong tried his best to control his emotions. "For both of our sakes, don't talk to me right now."

Xiao Bai was bewildered. "Why?"

Jian Rong enunciated coldly, "Fighting is a violation of the rules, murder is breaking the law."

Xiao Bai: "……???"

Hearing noise come from the front door, Ding-*ge* looked back as he harped, "You two really are something, huh? I haven't even waited this long for my wife before."

Lu Boyuan said, “Then you’re not treating sister-in-law very sincerely.”

“Bullshit, it’s more like your sister-in-law has never made me wait this long for her…” Ding-*ge* paused. “Did you drink too much? Your ears are so red?”

Jian Rong couldn’t help but look over.

Lu Boyuan’s complexion was the same as usual; only his ears were red, all the way to his earlobes.

When Lu Boyuan left the KTV, he hadn’t seemed drunk at all.

Lu Boyuan suddenly turned his head and glanced at him for less than two seconds before he swiftly looked away again. “A bit.”

Jian Rong’s fingers, which had just been held, started to tingle a little again.

“Then you guys must’ve gone pretty wild tonight. Before, when you mixed and drank red and white wine, your face didn’t even get red.” Ding-*ge* checked his watch. “Alright, hurry up, go shower and sleep… never mind, can you even shower after drinking? Just take one tomorrow. Sit here, I’ll make some honey water for you.”

Jian Rong instantly said, “I’ll do it.”

“You don’t need to, you should go and sleep.” Ding-*ge* refused without hesitating. “Wake up earlier tomorrow so you can practice after eating breakfast.”

Jian Rong was driven upstairs.

After entering his room, Jian Rong stood in front of his door for quite a while without moving. Currently, his body felt somewhat light, and his mind was completely empty. The only thing remaining in it was Lu Boyuan's "*I like you*."

Wait a moment—did Lu Boyuan actually say "*I like you*"?

Now that over ten minutes had passed, Jian Rong began to feel a bit unsure again. The destructive power of XIU's life-stealing rap was too great, and his head was still ringing.

Jian Rong rapidly showered before he laid down on his bed to send a text.

More precisely, he was typing something out.

This wasn't Jian Rong's first time being confessed to. Too many people were always confessing to him; if he opened any random private message, it would probably be asking for his WeChat account. Some of them also sent pictures of themselves over, and what's more, they were all very good-looking. Whenever this happened, Jian Rong would directly clear out his private messages, and he had never wavered in the slightest when reading a message.

Right now…

After showering, brushing his teeth, washing his face, and lying down on his bed, his heart was still beating extremely fast.

Jian Rong had his chat with Lu Boyuan pulled up. He had typed out so much that it was nearly a 300-word mini essay, but he hadn't sent out a single

damn word.

Jian Rong wanted to ask if Lu Boyuan was drunk, but before he could send it, he ended up backing out and deleting it.

If Lu Boyuan were to reply with a "*yes*," that would freaking be the rollercoaster of life.

After dawdling around for ten minutes, a message from Lu Boyuan popped up, ending Jian Rong's essay-writing time.

[R: Asleep?]

Lu Boyuan sent the text and tossed his phone onto the bed before he took off his jacket, which was covered by the smell of smoke and alcohol.

As he opened his closet and took out a loose T-shirt, planning to take a shower, someone knocked on his door.

Jian Rong was standing outside, wearing a short-sleeved shirt. The milky scent of his shower gel made Lu Boyuan feel slightly dazed.

Lu Boyuan was somewhat surprised. He briefly raised an eyebrow and made to open the door wider so that Jian Rong could come inside.

"I won't disturb your rest." Jian Rong rubbed his nose. "I just came to say something…"

Lu Boyuan gripped the doorknob. "Mn?"

Jian Rong said, "Me too."

It didn’t matter if Lu Boyuan had said those things while drunk or not.

Even if Lu Boyuan forgot everything tomorrow once he sobered up, Jian Rong still wanted to say it now.

He did too. He also liked Lu Boyuan.

Jian Rong always behaved quite simply, and he never paid much attention to detail. To this day, his livestream room’s personal bio was still the default one given by StarTV after first creating an account. Because of that, the water friends had even flamed him for being a loathsome straight guy.

But now he was bent, and he knew to be more delicate. A response should still be given in person; sending it over via text felt like it was lacking a bit of meaning and sincerity.

Lu Boyuan watched him quietly.

Jian Rong couldn’t bear his gaze, and he licked his lips. “That’s all, I’m done now. I’ll be going back…”

“Jian Rong.” Lu Boyuan called his name.

Jian Rong: “Ah.”

“I’m not drunk.”

Before Jian Rong could react, Lu Boyuan’s hand was already covering the nape of his neck. Following the force Lu Boyuan exerted, Jian Rong leaned forward.

If anyone walked out of their rooms at that moment, they would discover their mid laner standing in their jungler's doorway, with half of his body hidden in the jungler's room.

It was as if their fierce heartbeats were the only things remaining in the dim hallway.

Lu Boyuan bent down. The faint aroma of alcohol directly descended, and Jian Rong stared at Lu Boyuan's jaw, his mind utterly blank.

Lu Boyuan tilted his head ever so slightly to the side, their lips the barest fraction of a centimeter apart, so that their breaths landed on each other's faces.

Jian Rong felt like he most likely wouldn't even react this strongly if he won the championships one day in the future.

His pulse infiltrated his every cell, and his entire body trembled.

Lu Boyuan was too good-looking. This close, he still couldn't find a single flaw.

Lu Boyuan only halted in front of his lips for perhaps a second, but hundreds of thousands of barrage comments had already flown past in Jian Rong's mind.

Casting his eyes downward, Lu Boyuan swept a look across Jian Rong's lips before he shifted upwards and very gently kissed the mole set slightly on the right side of the tip of Jian Rong's nose.

Jian Rong lifted his chin, his legs a little numb.

The scent of alcohol clung to Lu Boyuan, and he didn't want any of it getting on Jian Rong. He caressed Jian Rong's neck before releasing him.

"Go back and sleep." Lu Boyuan gazed at him in a calm but restrained manner and said, "I can't let you come inside tonight."

Jian Rong returned to his room, locked the door, got in bed, and covered himself completely with his blanket.

He stared at the pattern on the blanket and thought—

Right now, how exactly am I any different from the wandering Little Fatty Orange, who defiled that grand and noble ragdoll cat.

—

The next day, Jian Rong inevitably woke up late.

By the time he finished eating breakfast and entered the practice room, everyone else was sitting in front of their computers, including Lu Boyuan.

Xiao Bai was in the middle of conversing with his stream. "I haven't heard our mid laner's freakishly persistent duo queue requests for an entire morning, my ears are feeling much more cleansed. I hope that he'll wake up a bit later every day from here on out, so that everybody else will be able to have a leisurely, relaxed training environment…"

Hearing noise, Xiao Bai glanced behind him and proficiently switched his attitude. "You're up, the days when you're not asking me to duo queue

really are super boring, ehe~"

Upon walking into the room, Jian Rong's first instinct was to look at Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan's figure was nearly completely blocked by the gaming chair. Jian Rong retracted his gaze. "Stop acting."

Right as Jian Rong turned on his computer, Xiao Bai turned his head and asked, "It's almost the end of the month, let's exchange our free gifts?"

Jian Rong's stream account was highly ranked, so he had a lot of free gifts every month.

Jian Rong didn't really care about that stuff. He logged into the game and gave a lazy "*en*" in reply before he opened up the streaming platform.

He instantly spotted the livestream room hanging on the home page's most prominent advertising spot—[Road: Waiting for someone, streaming casually.]

Jian Rong immediately clicked on it. Lu Boyuan's video wasn't on, and he wasn't playing LoL either. He was just idling on the game client as he chatted with XIU on WeChat, discussing the new jungle champion that was about to be released.

The barrage rushed by—

[Lillia: Another new jungler? Riot, do you think I'm dead?]

[XIU is here already, how come you're still not Q'ing yet? Who are you waiting for ah.]

[Why not turn on the camera God Lu ahhh]

[I think I heard my dumbass son's voice just now?]

[What do you mean 'I think,' he's snuck into the stream already, he's sitting there on the VIP list.]

Xiao Bai looked over. "Are you in my livestream room yet?"

Jian Rong gave all his free gifts to Lu Boyuan. "They're all gone."

Xiao Bai: "???"

"You're going back on your word!" Xiao Bai promptly fired out, "You're prioritizing love over friendship!!!"

Jian Rong choked. "...shut up, I'll make up for it with Meteor Showers later."

"Jian Rong."

Jian Rong whipped his head around at once. "Here."

Lu Boyuan pulled off one side of his headphones and asked mildly, "Let's duo queue?"

Jian Rong quickly entered Lu Boyuan's lobby, with Lu Boyuan's stream window open in the upper right corner.

For once, Lu Boyuan was chatting with the barrage.

“Yes, I was waiting for him.

“Mn, I haven’t queued with him for a whole week now.

“He didn’t want to queue with me.”

Jian Rong: “…”

[???]

[In that case, my dumbass son is indeed being a bit unappreciative of your kindness hah.]

[Why – do I – feel like – something is weird.]

[What’s going on with these two? If one person is streaming, then the other person has to idle in their livestream room?]

They entered the pick/ban screen. Jian Rong was filling in as support.

“I was queueing with them to practice our teamwork.” He raised his hand and covered his ear briefly before he spoke again, “It’s not that I didn’t want to.”

Lu Boyuan let out an “*en*” before he checked his own role and started typing.

[TTC · Road: Is ADC there]

[PUDXIU: Here God Lu.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: ……]

Lu Boyuan's eyebrows unfurrowed; things were much more convenient with someone he knew.

[TTC · Road: Let's switch roles, you be jungler, I'll be ADC.]

[PUDXIU: …OK.]

Jian Rong was startled.

After finishing the negotiation, Lu Boyuan hardly hesitated at all before locking in Kalista, the Spear of Vengeance.

[What's happening? God Lu gave the jungler position to someone else??]

[Why play ADC… there's a quite frightening thought in my head, but I don't have the guts to say it.]

[I'll say it for you! It's because Soft got support, and Road wants to be in bot lane with him!!]

[They're real!!!]

[Can you all stop with your YY? There isn't anything wrong with occasionally playing other roles if he's tired of playing jungler, is there?]

[Damn, logically I understand that, but Road freaking pulled out the Spear of Online Dating, it really is hard for *laozi* not to overthink things!!!]

The champion Kalista had a passive called "Oathsworn Bond." From the start of the game, she could bind herself to the support, and after level 6, her ult could directly retrieve the support and protect them from damage.

After four seconds, the support would choose a target location for themselves and could knock up an enemy into the air if they landed on them.

This skill could be used to engage in team fights or to escape.

The instant this champion was released, it was widely adored by gaming couples. Many girls liked to play soft support champions, which weren't very strong at surviving. At a critical moment, Kalista could protect her support extremely well.

Which was why everyone called this champion "the Spear of Online Dating."

But Jian Rong didn't like to play soft support. When he saw that champion, he didn't even give it a second thought before he chose Annie instead.

[PUDXIU: Will you two be okay in the bot lane? If you can't beat them, wait for me to come gank. My rank is gonna go up once I win one more game, you guys better not int[1] me.]

[Just Watch My Gameplay: We're gonna go on a massacre.]

[PUDXIU: ……alright then.]

If Jian Rong said massacre, then it would be a massacre.

Lu Boyuan was too good at positioning, and the enemy Ezreal couldn't even touch him with his Q. Meanwhile, Jian Rong blasted down the enemy support's health to the point that it was wailing out loud.

Level 6. Lu Boyuan recalled to base to replenish. After Jian Rong helped him block a wave of minions, he squatted in the bushes and started to go back to base with low health.

In the last three seconds, an eye popped up above Jian Rong's head—it was the ult belonging to the enemy mid laner, Twisted Fate.

Simultaneously, as Twisted Fate flew to his side, the enemy top laner teleported to Jian Rong's left.

Their intent to kill him was already solidified.

Jian Rong used the stun from his passive, wanting to try and trade Twisted Fate.

At that moment, the sound of a flash came from his headphones—controlling Kalista, Lu Boyuan flashed and hurried to the scene, saving him with Kalista's ult at the very last second.

[If I were Soft, I'd marry myself off to him right now.]

[Damn, the Spear of Online Dating deserves her name!]

[Why is my son the one getting married off and not the one doing the marrying[2]?]

[Why do you think? You pull up the post-match replay and decide for yourself.]

Just as the water friends were debating the question of who was marrying and who was being married off, a very nooby scene happened.

Currently, Jian Rong only had 37 HP remaining—even a support could kill him with one hit.

But without the slightest bit of hesitation or uncertainty, he still smashed himself into the crowd of enemies. He then proceeded to toss out his ult, stunning the enemy top laner, mid laner, and support, before he followed up with a ferocious damage combo. After he finished beautifully and simply dishing out all his damage……. the enemies still had half their freaking health left.

With a single auto attack from the enemy support, Jian Rong died on the spot.

Jian Rong: "?"

Lu Boyuan: "."

Jian Rong: "…my bad."

[Hahahahaha I'll really be damned]

[As a lousy soft support, you have quite the confidence in yourself hah.]

[You have a Spellthief's Edge, but you're playing like you have a Needlessly Large Rod]

[God Lu is thinking: *laozi's* flash was fed to the dogs.]

[That's it? That's it?? Looks like my son is destined to have nothing to do with online dating for the rest of his life.]

[Well that's not for sure, the little dumbass' mechanics are quite amazing, and he seems very reserved and aloof when chatting. It could be said that he's the most popular type of guy in the online dating world!]

[All jokes aside, the dumbass does often receive friend requests from young ladies.]

With a few hits, Lu Boyuan killed the Lulu that got Jian Rong before he cast a glance at the barrage. "He won't date online.

"Why? …no particular reason, I won't let him. Why won't I let him… because I'm his captain.

"Restricting the team members' ability to date?" When he saw that comment, Lu Boyuan inexplicably laughed. "I'm not. He can date whoever he wants in reality, in whatever way he wishes to.

"I won't even object if he brings his romantic partner to the base."

Jian Rong had just woken up, and he already couldn't take it anymore.

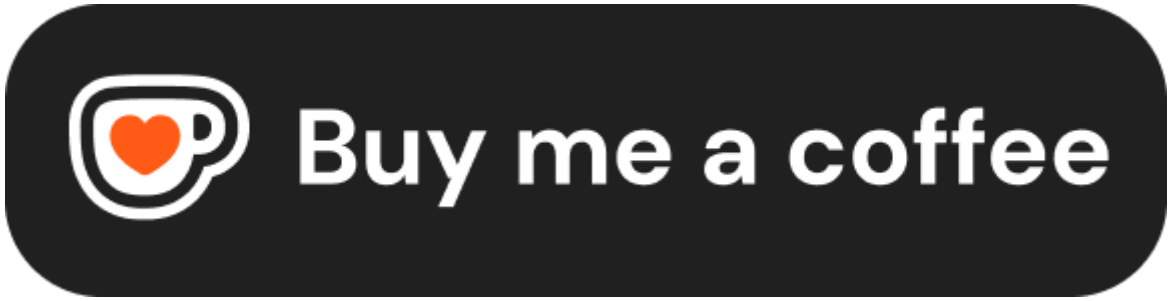
He clicked his mouse loudly as he repeatedly pressed his lips together a few times.

Whether Lu Boyuan could be considered his romantic partner or not, Jian Rong didn't know.

But in any case, the person who he wanted to bring into the base had already lived there for three freaking years.

Translation Notes

1. *XIU actually says 'acting' here but I feel like it's close enough to inting – which is short for 'intentionally feeding' but basically just dying a lot/being bad* ^
2. *Quick Chinese lesson! The word for 'marrying' someone is gendered in Chinese – 嫁 (jia) vs 娶 (qu). 'Jia' is used when a woman marries a man. 'Qu' is used when a man takes a woman's hand in marriage. In this case, the first comment used 'jia', and this comment is asking why 'jia' and not 'qu'* ^



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ICDI Chapter 84: Yes, they were dating.

Jian Rong hadn't slept well at all the night before. Even after he woke up, the very first thought that entered his mind was—how should he interact and communicate with his romantic partner.

But now, there was another problem.

Were he and Lu Boyuan considered to be dating?

Jian Rong knew absolutely nothing about this sort of thing. After he was killed for the third time and his screen went gray, Jian Rong couldn't help but take out his phone to contact his most experienced friend in terms of love—

[R-ong: Are you free? Want to ask you something.]

[Shiliu: ...don't you never look at your phone when you're gaming? What's up, it must be urgent.]

It was true that Jian Rong didn't tend to check his phone while gaming. However, he was playing support this time, and support Annie's only purpose was to engage, so it didn't really matter if he chatted a bit.

He swiftly typed.

[R-ong: I just wanted to ask, what kind of relationship should two people have to be considered dating.]

[Shiliu: ?????]

[Shiliu: Aren't you in the middle of high intensity training? You still have time to get in a relationship?? With who?]

[R-ong: I'm not sure if we are in a relationship]

[Shiliu: How can you be unsure about that? How far along are you two? Hugging? Holding hands?]

[R-ong: ...]

[R-ong: Haven't hugged.]

Shiliu was about to reply, "*If you haven't hugged, how could you be dating*."

[R-ong: We held hands for probably two seconds, and then]

[R-ong: Kissed once]

Shiliu held his phone and went silent for a moment.

[Shiliu: Aren't you being too scummy]

[R-ong: ?]

[Shiliu: You already freaking kissed the girl, and you're still saying you don't know if you're dating or not??]

Jian Rong: "....."

Jian Rong decided not to explain.

After playing two games in a row, Jian Rong finally realized that his concerns were completely unnecessary—although he and Lu Boyuan were

together every day, their other three teammates were also in the practice room with them, so they basically didn't have any time alone with each other.

Even in the game, there were eight other random players with them.

And also…

Xiao Bai roared, "P-baby! I need heals!! Give me some milk give me some milk—niceee, L – O – V – E I only love P-baby!!!"

Jian Rong expressionlessly stole the enemy's blue buff.

And also, with this *ge* next to him serving as a foil, his and Lu Boyuan's conversation seemed that much more unremarkable and normal.

They queued together all the way until the afternoon, before the five of them moved to the practice match room.

They only had three practice matches scheduled for today and ended up finishing before eight PM without losing a single one.

Once they were done with the practice matches, Jian Rong serenely decided to go downstairs to continue queueing when Ding-*ge* opened the door and came in.

"You guys played pretty well tonight." Ding-*ge* leaned next to the door. "What are your plans for the evening?"

Lu Boyuan said, "Play ranked."

Ding-*ge* nodded. “Speaking of which, I have something to tell you all. The new patch is about to come out on the Korean server, so starting from tomorrow, you guys should go play over there.”

Actually, regardless of whether it was for ordinary training or streaming, the professional LoL players all liked to play on the Korean server. Patches came out faster on the Korean server, and their higher tiers were of better quality. Meanwhile, the Chinese server was different. Although the “Super Zone” server had been specially established for players who were Diamond 2 or above, there were still a lot of actors and trolls.

The only reason why everyone had trickled back to the domestic server was because of the recently announced official rank requirement. But at this point, all the players’ ranks were above the passing line.

“Fantastic.” Xiao Bai slumped back in his chair. “I’m about to lose it over those actors.”

Jian Rong gave an impartial evaluation. “You’re also one of them.”

Ding-*ge* laughed. “Especially you, Jian Rong, you seem to really enjoy playing on the domestic server. Does your Korean server account still exist?”

Jian Rong collected his peripherals. “Who knows, it was locked some time ago, I’m not sure if it was ever unlocked.”

Ding-*ge*: “…it was locked? Why.”

Jian Rong: “For insulting someone.”

Ding-*ge*: "……you're even capable of insulting someone on the Korean server?! I thought you didn't know Korean?"

Jian Rong: "I used English."

Xiao Bai was shocked. "You know English?"

"Machine translation."

Xiao Bai gave him a big thumbs up. "You're incredible."

Understanding dawned on Ding-*ge*, and he said, "Then you should check your account and see. If it hasn't been unlocked, I'll set one up for you."

Jian Rong let out an "*en*" and picked up his keyboard. Pretending to act very natural, he turned his head. "Do you… still want to queue together in a bit?"

Lu Boyuan looked at him. "Yes."

"Hang on, let's not practice any more tonight." Ding-*ge* suddenly said, "How about we go watch a movie together?"

Everyone was startled, and they all couldn't help but wonder if their coach had been possessed by a ghost.

"Why're you all looking at me like that? You're making it seem like I'm usually extremely harsh towards you guys…" Ding-*ge* cleared his throat. "I just thought that you've all been working pretty hard these past two weeks. Also, this is a League movie produced by Riot, and it'll stop showing in theaters tomorrow. I asked the other teams and found out that their players

had all seen it already, so I was considering if I should take you guys to watch it too. I just checked when the nearby theater's last showing is, and it starts forty minutes from now. There are still spots remaining, just tell me if you guys want to go or not."

Twenty minutes later, TTC's five members finished getting dressed and fumbled their way onto the team's car in the dark.

By the time they arrived at the movie theater, it was already getting close to the start of the movie. Ding-*ge* randomly handed them each a ticket. "Go go go, hurry up and get inside."

After entering their assigned theater, Jian Rong pinched his ticket as he glanced at Ding-*ge*, who was sitting between him and Lu Boyuan, and felt conflicted.

Ding-*ge* was quite sensitive, and he instantly turned his head to ask, "Something to say?"

Before Jian Rong could think of an excuse to switch places with him, the person sitting on Ding-*ge*'s other side patted his shoulder.

The movie hadn't begun yet. Lu Boyuan was standing next to Ding-*ge*. "Let's switch places."

Ding-*ge* was confused. "Why? Isn't your seat more in the center."

Lu Boyuan jerked his chin up. "I'm sitting with him."

Ding-*ge*: "…"

He looked back and forth between their jungler and mid laner numerous times before he moved over to the empty seat beside him, his face filled with doubt.

Jian Rong did his best to maintain a poker face in front of Ding-*ge*, but once Lu Boyuan sat down, he couldn't resist ducking his head, tugging at his hair, and twisting his fingers together, full of small movements.

This was a blockbuster movie, telling the story of over a hundred champions in Runeterra. The game company had invested much capital into the movie; after so many years of the game's popularity, the company had finally created this movie, which contained an astonishing amount of detail.

Upon seeing his favorite champions come to life on the big screen, Jian Rong swiftly became entranced.

Even so, when someone gripped Jian Rong's hand for a brief moment, not too lightly or heavily, he still immediately snapped back to reality.

The people on the right were in the middle of whispering and discussing the movie's plot, making the left side seem particularly quiet in comparison.

Lu Boyuan's right hand was propped up under his chin, and he appeared to be watching the movie attentively. In reality, his other hand was currently hooked around their mid laner's fingers.

Jian Rong's heart was thumping even faster than the beat of the background music. The magnificent scenes in the movie turned into still frames before his eyes.

It was completely dark in the theater. Afraid of them being recognized, Ding-*ge* hadn't allowed them to take off their hats.

It felt like Lu Boyuan was massaging his hand for him. He slowly kneaded the two fingers Jian Rong used to click his mouse a few times, before he started to withdraw his hand.

Jian Rong reacted quicker than his mind could catch up; he flipped his hand over and latched onto Lu Boyuan's.

Damn.

Why the hell did I grab his hand.

Under the brim of his hat, Jian Rong licked his lips, his scalp tingling as he pondered over what to do next.

Lu Boyuan calmly let him hold his hand for two seconds, and then he laughed. That laugh easily vanished into Xiao Bai's "*goddamn, Yasuo almost looks half-decent like this*."

Jian Rong felt like he was holding Lu Boyuan's hand in an extremely stupid manner. He was about to relax his grip slightly when Lu Boyuan moved his hand upwards and pressed their palms together.

It was humiliating to say it: he was someone who could typically play ranked for an entire day and passionately interact with eighty actors without batting an eye or feeling his heartbeat quicken, but at that current moment, his palm was somewhat sweaty.

Jian Rong couldn't help but prod an elbow into Lu Boyuan very gently, causing Lu Boyuan to lean towards him a bit.

Jian Rong's voice was very quiet, like he was committing a crime. "My hand is sweating."

He tried hard to exhibit a worldly, experienced demeanour as he negotiated with Lu Boyuan in a way that he thought was extremely natural, "How about I wipe it off first, and then we can hold hands."

Lu Boyuan hummed.

Right as Jian Rong was about to draw back his hand, it was gripped instead. Lu Boyuan picked up a corner of his jacket and helped to wipe Jian Rong's palm, before he laced his fingers back through and closed them tight around Jian Rong's.

The movie finished.

As they were walking out of the theater, not even the mask could muffle Yuan Qian's voice. "Holy shit, those special effects were way too amazing, my heart was beating wildly for the entire two and a half hours!"

After he said that, he couldn't resist looking for agreement. As a result, he looked at the person closest to him. "Right?"

Jian Rong said truthfully, "Right."

"It was pretty good." Xiao Bai clicked his tongue. "But the couple sitting next to me was so annoying."

Jian Rong's footsteps paused.

Xiao Bai: "Did they have to hold hands even while watching a movie? What, do they usually not have any chances to touch each other? If I wasn't sitting right next to them, I bet they would've kissed too! And that guy kept explaining the champions to his girlfriend, it was so noisy…"

Jian Rong heaved a silent sigh of relief before he guiltily stooped over and swiftly got in the car.

On their way back, the first few rows of the car held an extremely enthusiastic discussion about the contents of the movie.

Xiao Bai: "My Thresh is so freaking handsome, I'm gonna find that shot of him throwing out his hook and make it my computer wallpaper."

Yuan Qian: "Aatrox was pretty cool too."

Ding-*ge*: "I was more surprised that LeBlanc and Katarina actually showed up as well, and they made it past the cut too[1]… did Riot use the power of money?"

Jian Rong hid his hands in his sleeves as he thought absent-mindedly—

Was Aatrox in the movie? And Katarina? What was the plot of this movie again… he didn't have any impression of it whatsoever.

Ding-*ge*'s voice floated over from the front. "Jian Rong, a staff sent me the Korean server account. I'll forward it to you, if you can't log into your account tomorrow, you can play using this one."

Jian Rong snapped out of it. “Okay.”

Half a minute later, Ding-*ge* frowned. “Why did you change your profile picture on WeChat? It took me so long to find it.”

Xiao Bai yawned and asked casually, “Wasn’t his profile picture my *ge*’s pig? What did he change it to?”

Ding-*ge* said, “An orange cat.”

“…” Jian Rong stared out the window. “I just felt like changing it, so I did.”

It was dark inside the car, so when Lu Boyuan’s phone screen lit up, Jian Rong subconsciously glanced over at it.

He saw Lu Boyuan open his chat history with the animal clinic and randomly select a photo sent over of the little female cat before downloading and saving it. Then, he made it his WeChat profile picture.

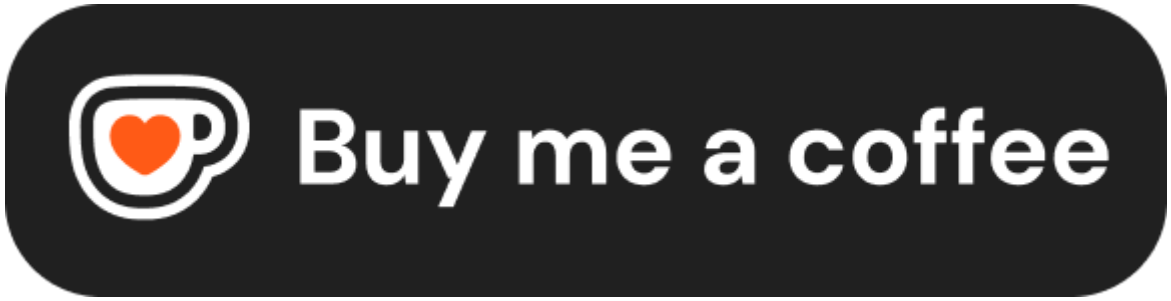
Jian Rong tugged down the brim of his hat and stiffly retracted his gaze, stuffing both hands in his pockets as he sat up very straight.

Yes, they were dating, he thought.

Translation Notes

1. *I’m assuming he’s saying this because LeBlanc and Katarina are both dressed on the more revealing side, so he’s surprised they passed censorship? If I’m wrong someone correct me lol* ^

Wei: omggg it’s OFFICIAL official T^T also the matching profile pics are SO CUTE



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ICDI Chapter 85: These are Road's exclusive runes.

Thank you Kitty for the ko-fi ♡

When he woke up the next day, Jian Rong was instantly greeted with a flood of WeChat group messages on his phone.

[Ding-*ge*: When you guys are up, post a movie impression on your Weibos, give it some publicity.]

[Pine: It's about to stop showing in theaters, what's the point of giving it publicity? When it just started airing, didn't we already forward their Weibo posts?]

Jian Rong rubbed his eyes.

[R-ong: I didn't forward anything.]

[Ding-*ge*: I logged into your account and forwarded it for you. I've told you this before, can't you pay more attention to the messages I send in the group chat?!]

[Ding-*ge*: It's not showing in theaters anymore, that's true, but isn't it about to go online as a pay-to-watch movie? So they still need a lot of publicity. But this time, the box office has already exploded anyway, so we're just gilding the lily.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Then why didn't you just help write the movie impression for us while you were at it.]

[Ding-*ge*: Why don't I just go on stage and help compete for you all?]

[P-Baby's Little Support: …]

[R: What to write]

[Ding-*ge*: Hype it up a bit, or if you have any opinions, feel free to voice them—remember at all costs, only praise, no negativity!!!]

[Ding-*ge*: Why did you change your profile picture too.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: *Ge*, you got a cat?]

[R: No]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Then who's the cat in your profile picture?]

[R: My daughter-in-law]

Originally, Jian Rong intended to laze in bed for a little longer.

But when he saw that message, he got out of bed and pumped his fist in the air before he expressionlessly whistled and went into the bathroom to brush his teeth and wash his face.

The group chat was still asking Lu Boyuan where his daughter-in-law came from, and who the son was.

As Jian Rong was brushing his teeth, he couldn't resist inserting a few emoticons to make his presence known.

[Yuan Qian: What breed is this cat, a ragdoll?]

[R-ong: [nodding dumbly.jpg]]

[P-Baby's Little Support: So cute!]

[P-Baby's Little Support: It's even cuter if you compare it to that cat in Jian Rong's profile pic.]

[R-ong: ?]

[R-ong: What's wrong with my profile pic?]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Ugly]

Jian Rong wanted to speak up on behalf of the little orange cat, but he gave up on that idea after he cast a look at his profile picture.

Let them say whatever they want.

In any case, no matter how ugly Little Orange was, he was still the father of the babies in the little ragdoll's stomach.

[Ding-*ge*: You're back from your check-up?]

Jian Rong paused in the middle of his teeth-brushing. Before he could ask anything, Ding-*ge* withdrew the message at the speed of light.

[P-Baby's Little Support: Ah? *Ge*, your hand's been hurting again?]

[Ding-*ge*: …]

[R: No, ordinary check-up.]

[Yuan Qian: Then will you still make it back in time for the practice match this afternoon?]

Lu Boyuan had just returned to the base and didn't feel like typing, so he casually took a picture from where he was sitting on the sofa and sent it in the group chat, indicating that he was already back at the base.

The auntie walked out from the kitchen and looked startled upon seeing him. "Oh my, Xiao Lu, you went to get a check-up? Wasn't tomorrow the date of the check-up? I didn't come in early today, did you eat breakfast? How about I fix something up for you right now…"

There was a hasty clatter of footsteps. Lu Boyuan glanced in the direction of the staircase before he said to the auntie, "We have a match tomorrow, so I went in advance today. I ate outside, if you could just make him some food instead."

Jian Rong came downstairs before he could dry his face, so there were still droplets of water dripping from his chin.

Lu Boyuan was sitting in a relaxed way, his hands resting next to his legs. "Come here."

Jian Rong walked over and subconsciously wiped the back of his hand against his chin. A few seconds passed, and he wiped his mouth too.

"What's wrong with your hand…" Jian Rong frowned and peeked around him before asking, "Did I hold it too tight last night?"

Lu Boyuan blinked. He lifted his hand and said, amused, “This is made of flesh, not glass, it won’t break no matter how long you hold it.”

Jian Rong also felt like this question of his was a bit stupid. “What did the doctor say?”

“The same old thing. But it’s been recuperating well, so I can practice for an hour longer from now on.”

Smelling a faint peppermint fragrance, Lu Boyuan swept a look at Jian Rong’s jaw and neck from the corner of his eye.

Jian Rong was completely oblivious. “That’s good then.”

Jian Rong let out a sigh of relief and could finally spare the energy to tidy up his shirt collar, which accidentally got wet when he was washing his face.

He bent over and picked up a few napkins from the coffee table before he leaned back against the couch and tugged up his collar. Ducking his head, he casually swiped at the drenched fabric a few times.

It was spring now in Shanghai, and the temperature during the day was just right. Recently, Jian Rong had taken to only wearing a thin and loose short-sleeved T-shirt in the base.

Jian Rong’s movements were quite careless. Lu Boyuan unexpectedly glimpsed an expanse of dazzling pale skin, causing his brows to give a sudden twitch.

The base's front door was abruptly pushed open. When Ding-*ge* saw them, he instantly asked, "Where's the movie impression? Everyone else posted theirs already, only you two haven't!"

Lu Boyuan withdrew his gaze.

Jian Rong released his shirt collar. "I'll do it soon."

The auntie's voice floated over from the kitchen. "Xiao Rong, should I put your breakfast on the dining table for you?"

Jian Rong didn't want to trouble the auntie, so he stood up. "No need, I'll take it to the practice room and eat there."

Seeing that their mid laner was eating properly at last, Ding-*ge* nodded in satisfaction before he looked towards the couch—

And just happened to see Lu Boyuan cast a frosty glance at him.

Before Ding-*ge* could react, Lu Boyuan tilted his head back against the couch headrest, picked up the hat lying next to him, and covered his face with it.

After Lu Boyuan changed clothes, he was called into the meeting room by Ding-*ge* and still wasn't out by the time Jian Rong was done eating breakfast.

Jian Rong opened the game accelerator and finally logged into his Korean server account after repeatedly trying several different passwords.

He adjusted his webcam a bit before he started streaming.

[Hot damn, how come you're playing on the Korean server?]

[Wasn't this account locked?]

[Locks for flaming only last 3 days.]

[I joined this livestream room pretty late, this is actually my first time seeing the little dumbass play on the Korean server.]

[Speaking of which, aren't the other pro players all on the Korean server? How come Soft kept staying on the Chinese server?]

[Why else? It's because he's trash, the Korean server is too strong, he can't win there.]

"When your dad climbed up to rank one on the Korean server, you didn't even know how to use a keyboard yet." Jian Rong said coldly, "Don't like playing on the Korean server.

"Why? …no particular reason, it's hard to communicate, the difficulty level is average, the champions' dialogue doesn't sound nice. Every single announcement ends with *seumnida, seumnida*. After playing on that server for two days, even my dreams were filled with *seumnida*, too annoying.

"Why am I playing there now… a requirement from the coach."

Jian Rong checked his rank.

If an account didn't play ranked for a long period of time, it would enter a grace period before continuously losing points and even dropping tiers.

However, Shiliu had borrowed his Korean account half a year ago, which was why his current rank was still Diamond 2.

Jian Rong selected his roles before entering matchmaking. After that, he gave his livestream room a new name.

[TTC · Soft – Climbing to KR server rank 1 on stream.]

[???]

[Each person's dream flying higher than the last.]

[Someone who didn't freaking know better would think that you had 1,500 LP in Korean Challenger]

[How about you get in Challenger first, and then you can come tell Dad that you're aiming for KR server rank 1, ok?]

[A tiny dumbass, an enormous dream.]

[Fake title, reported.]

"Are you all reporting goblins or something…" Jian Rong sneered, "Have your horizons narrowed because I haven't been streaming that much lately? It's rank one on the Korean server, that's all, I can climb up there as I please. Just watch."

Jian Rong's hidden account ranking was high. Even though he was Diamond 2, once he queued into a game and looked at the other players' rankings—apart from the ADC, everyone on the other team was Grandmaster.

The dad fans felt a bit concerned about this game.

[Came in when I saw the stream title, climbing to KR server rank 1?? What's Soft's Korean account? I just scrolled through the top 50, I didn't see this ID.]

[Perhaps you should go check the Diamond rankings instead?]

[Rank one on the Korean server? The LPL player who currently has the highest rank on the Korean server is only in the top 20, right? Have you TTC players fallen to the point where you have to use this kind of title to attract water friends??]

[Oh my, a Squid fan, I've been waiting for you dumbasses for so long!]

[Even if my son left the stream title completely blank, he would still be more popular than those useless pieces of trash from your team. Isn't that infuriating.]

Just as the barrage was at the height of their quarreling, they heard a *thunk* as Jian Rong locked in Yasuo.

The champion Yasuo was also known as "Happy Wind Man[1]." His E skill allowed him to endlessly dash between monsters, enemies, and enemy minions while also dealing damage.

No matter how low my health is, or what the situation of the game is like, as long as you give me a wave of minions, I can definitely outplay—this was the firmest belief in the hearts of all players who were experienced at playing Yasuo.

Want to experience dying like the wind? Then pick Yasuo!

Lost your passion for LoL? Then pick Yasuo!

Want to enthusiastically interact with your teammates? Then pick Yasuo!

When this champion was chosen, the barrage froze for a second.

[……you fucking unfilial son, *laozi* flamed those dumbasses for that long, just waiting for you to explode the entire match and grind over their faces! You're really something, ah, you go and pull out a Kindergarten-suo instead???]

[Is that Squid fan I was arguing with earlier still here? Come out, let's reconcile.]

[Announcement! Announcement! The stream title is solely reflective of the dumbass streamer's personal behavior, it has nothing to do with the water friends!]

[Although the icon for being his stream's diehard fan is attached to my username, I reallyyy have nothing to do with him.]

[Dumbass darling bravely fly! This game Dad won't follow bye.]

"Who the hell asked you all to follow me." Jian Rong fixed his runes. "Don't be in such a rush to reconcile with the Squid fans, Dad is gonna go on a massacre this round."

Actually, it was normal for the fans to feel like this game was done for. Those who would pull out Yasuo in the higher tiers were already messing

with their teammates' minds; what's more, this was the Korean server. The majority of people believed that the Korean server's Grandmaster tier was equivalent to the Chinese server's Challenger tier. To top it off, Jian Rong hadn't played Yasuo in a very long time, so of course everyone thought that his chance of winning this game wasn't high.

So when Jian Rong's Happy Wind Man went to gank bot at level 7 and got three kills with a flurry of E's, gifts already began to occupy his entire screen.

At level 13, Jian Rong was by himself with his minions when four people from the opposing team jumped out from the bushes to gank him.

Jian Rong turned tail and ran. Three seconds later, he suddenly flashed to the right—not only was this flash completely useless for the purpose of escaping, it even brought him a tiny bit closer to the enemies.

Before the water friends could spam their "*fucking noob*," "*what kind of dumbass play*," and similar comments, they saw Yasuo blow a gust of wind behind him—gathering up all four enemy players.

He followed up with his ult and Ignite, directly oneshotting the ADC. Then, he E'd between the remaining three players and auto attacked. The enemy support had this outplay rubbed right in his face, causing him to miss every single one of his skills.

—"Quadra kill!"

Yasuo, who killed four people, sheathed his blade and recalled back to base in an extremely confident and carefree manner.

In the video, the teenager wore a calm expression, while the water friends in the stream filled the screen with their astonishment.

[The Koreans are all shocked hahaha both teams keep spamming question marks all over the place!! Feels too good!!]

[That Squid fan who was just arguing with me, come out right now]

[No way no way you all get so cocky after just winning a Grandmaster game? Have you never won before?]

[Are you a dog? As soon as someone calls for you, you come out?]

[Who knows if I've ever won before, but everyone knows that Squid has lost 11 times in a row in the regular season~~]

[If the Yasuo play rate increases in the next few days on the domestic server, nobody here is blameless.]

[Dumbass darling is super great! Mommy kiss kiss!!!]

[Son, fly high, Dad's already refilled his money. Once you reach rank one on the Korean server, I'll send you a Meteor Shower.]

After twenty minutes, the opposing team simply and efficiently chose to surrender.

Jian Rong rejected the friend requests that came flocking in. "Sure, I'll remember your ID. Keep your gift and wait, don't give it to another streamer, I'll come accept it after I climb to rank one."

In the span of one short game, Jian Rong's stream popularity skyrocketed to the top of the platform.

Jian Rong didn't waste any time and immediately entered the next game.

This time, he got jungler.

If Jian Rong had to pick one role that he couldn't play very well, then it would undoubtedly be jungler. When he was playing as a mid laner, he already wasn't fond of providing assistance, which was something even more necessary for a jungler, who had to run all over the map.

Jian Rong pulled up an online translator and typed in, "*Give me mid, I'll carry*." He copied the translation results into the game and hit send.

His mid laner teammate replied with a decisive [no].

[If you just flat out say you don't know how to play jungler, they'll give it to you.]

"Who says I don't know how?" Jian Rong didn't feel like fiddling with the online translator anymore. "I'm an all-rounder."

When Jian Rong's turn to pick his champion rolled around, he took quite a while to choose. Upon spotting a certain champion, he abruptly remembered that this account had skins.

As a result, he shifted his mouse and selected Lee Sin.

[You know how to play this?!]

“I’ve played him a bit before.”

[Played a bit before = don’t know how.]

[That’s true. If he did know how to play him, this dumbass would’ve already bragged his way into the sky by now.]

Jian Rong ignored them. He chose Lu Boyuan’s championship skin before he opened the “One-Click Rune Setup” function provided by the LoL gaming assistant. This function supplied players with numerous rune sets used by top players.

Jian Rong picked a random “S11 Lee Sin Jungle Best Runes” set and swapped it out for himself.

A few seconds later, Jian Rong raised an eyebrow and pulled up the function again.

The third set was called “Road’s Lee Sin Jungle Exclusive Runes.”

Jian Rong blinked and nonchalantly switched to this set.

[What, is “S11 Lee Sin Jungle Best Runes” not worthy of Your Highness?]

[Wait a sec, aren’t these two sets the exact same???]

[Don’t ask, the answer is that he likes the name of this set.]

Jian Rong guiltily averted his eyes. “…were these two sets the same? Didn’t notice. *Ai*, why are you guys so annoying? Even when I’m just changing out my runes, you all have to waste so much time over it…”

Before Jian Rong could finish speaking, countless "!!!" and "*ahhh*" suddenly floated across the barrage.

Baffled, Jian Rong was about to ask what they were screaming foolishly about now, when someone gripped his hand over his mouse.

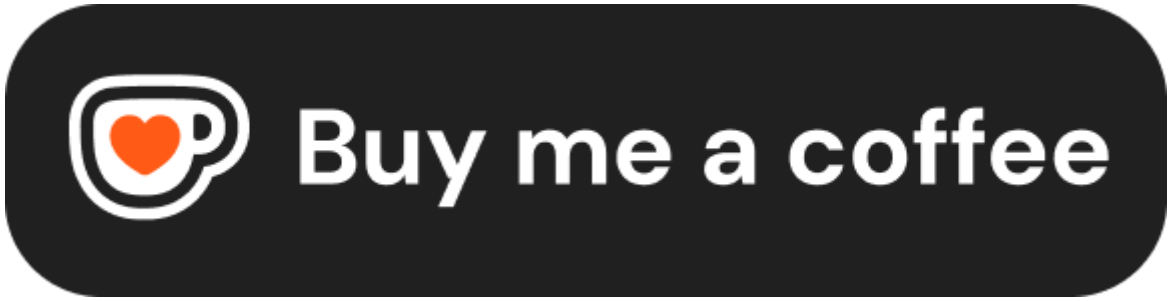
Lu Boyuan had also changed into short-sleeves, and his palm felt slightly cool as it covered the back of Jian Rong's hand. Lu Boyuan controlled Jian Rong's hand and moved the mouse to open the rune page, helping him reselect the runes.

Save, apply.

Lu Boyuan withdrew his hand and straightened up before he very casually ruffled Jian Rong's hair a few times. He said, "These are Road's exclusive runes."

Translation Notes

1. *Chinese nickname for Yasuo – basically from what I know, Yasuo is this super controversial hated champion (or maybe just Yasuo players lol). This nickname stems from the idea that "even if your entire team hates you or you keep dying, you'll still feel happy playing yasuo"* ^



ICDI Chapter 86: Too bad my son only dates in the workplace and not online.

It took a few seconds after Lu Boyuan walked out of the video frame for the stream's water friends and the streamer himself to snap out of it.

[Is this a teammate benefit???]

[I suddenly remembered something, the day before yesterday when I was watching Xiao Bai's stream, he asked Pine what runes he should pick for Aphelios. Pine asked him, 'Does the Tencent gaming assistant not want to serve you' hahahahahahaha]

[Even if he wanted to change the runes, he didn't have to hold his hand!!!]

[Exactly, he should've held the little dumbass in his lap and selected the runes while explaining their uses!]

[Damn, he went too fast, I didn't see which runes Road changed!! If someone saw it, could you please let me know ahhh]

[I didn't see it either I was too busy staring at my husband's face QAQ]

[Son, open the rune page so Dad can copy it down.]

Jian Rong ducked his head and repeatedly rubbed his neck with his hand. "With how trash you all are, it's the same no matter what runes you use."

[???]

[Dammit, why can you only report a personal attack from another water friend on StarTV? They don't care about streamers attacking water friends, is that so?]

[You aren't even willing to share this with Daddy? A dumbass that was married off, spilled water that can't be retrieved??]

Jian Rong disregarded them. He pursed his lips and focused on the game instead.

His Lee Sin was indeed average, but it was enough for Diamond tier, especially with the added help of Road's runes… by mid-game, the enemy's jungle was Jian Rong's second home.

After winning the game, innumerable friend requests popped up the moment Jian Rong returned to the post-match score page.

His friend requests would always blow up if he was streaming. Jian Rong opened the listing and rejected them one by one, all the way until he saw an ID named "Savior."

He had played against Savior two years ago, so he knew that this Korean server account belonged to PUD's mid laner himself.

He hesitated and frowned before accepting.

[Savior: Hl]

[softsndd: *speak chinese*[1]]

[Damn, you're telling a Korean on the Korean server to speak Chinese hahahaha]

[LOL I'm watching Savior's stream, Savior's Chinese isn't quite good enough and his *pinyin* is even worse, he called XIU over to type for him hahaha]

[Savior: soft?]

[softsndd: .]

[Everyone look! This period!! Is this not the number one cold and aloof male god choice for an online dating partner? My dumbass son is also handsome to boot!]

[Too bad my son only dates in the workplace and not online.]

[Savior: softsndd *what does that mean*?]

[softsndd: *I am your* dad]

[Savior: ...]

Savior asked Jian Rong if he wanted to duo queue, saying that he could go on his side account. Jian Rong instantly refused.

Jian Rong glanced at the barrage. "It's not because I think he's bad, we both play the same role, so how do you queue together? He has to switch to his side account too. There's no need, we're not that close."

At first, Jian Rong only considered this a brief interlude that concluded with his rejection.

Until the day of the match rolled around. Right as he sat down in the car, he heard Xiao Bai and the rest discussing Savior.

Xiao Bai was browsing through Tieba. “Wah, Savior’s really been going through it these past few days. He changed his ID overnight, and he didn’t even stream yesterday.”

“What’s up with him?” Ding-*ge* got in the car. “Wait a minute, didn’t I tell you not to look at Tieba so much!”

“The match hasn’t even started yet, I’m just getting in my fill.” Xiao Bai scrolled down his screen. “Since he’s been consecutively winning the regular season matches lately, the netizens predicted that he would probably go participate in MSI with PUD this year. Then Korean trolls started to insult him and stir up drama.”

MSI was short for League of Legends’ Mid-Season Invitational tournament, an event that was held once a year. Together with the World Championship and All-Star event, the three competitions were treated as League of Legends’ top three international tournaments.

Only one team from each major competitive regional league could compete in MSI, so solely the Spring Split champion could play on behalf of the LPL.

“Aren’t they insulting the wrong person.” Jian Rong raised an eyebrow. “Who said PUD could get into MSI?”

Lu Boyuan put his equipment bag on the seat near the window and sat down next to Jian Rong. “Never mind if they can get into it or not. If they’re

going to flame anyone, shouldn't they flame 98k first?"

"98k has been flamed for many years now, his mentality is extremely strong." Ding-*ge* checked his watch and told the driver to start the car before he said, "98k was the first Korean import player. Forget being insulted, he's even received death threats."

Yuan Qian was startled. "Fuck, it was that terrible?"

Xiao Bai: "Then Savior got off considerably lightly… aside from being flamed, his Korean account's ID was spread online. Now he encounters actors in every single game, and most recently, he lost 13 games in a row. Even though he changed his ID, it's useless."

Jian Rong searched up Savior's match history. It truly was tragic; each game displayed absurd scores like 0/16/0, 0/13/2. No wonder he wanted to play on his side account.

"Tsk, Jian Rong is incredible." Xiao Bai suddenly said, "There's actually a stickied post on Ventbar that's broadcasting your Korean server ranking."

Ventbar was LoL's most famous Tieba forum, as well as the largest gathering place for LoL trolls. They nitpicked the winners and flamed the losers. Every well-known pro player possessed a skyscraper of anti posts on this bar.

Jian Rong was an exception. Before he even became a pro player, he already owned a thousand-floor high-rise building in this forum.

Disinterested, Jian Rong put in his earphones. "Oh."

“However… what the hell.” Xiao Bai turned his head in shock. “You climbed from Diamond 2 to Grandmaster this fast??”

Jian Rong gave an “*en*.”

Xiao Bai was stunned.

This wasn’t even a fucking question of trying hard or not anymore. In such a short span of time, it was impossible to achieve this without having numerous pages and pages of consecutive wins.

Yuan Qian: “You can climb this fast even in the higher Korean tiers… impressive.”

Jian Rong: “The Korean server is easier to play in than the domestic server.”

For a moment, Yuan Qian couldn’t tell if he was acting cocky or if he was being serious. “…wha?”

Jian Rong said succinctly, “There are a lot of trolls and actors in the domestic server, as well as noobs who were boosted up, making it much more difficult.”

Pine said indifferently, “There are a ton of actors on the Korean server too.”

“That’s right! And those actors are extremely disgusting, they’ll only mess with players, pro or otherwise, who have *pinyin* IDs.” Xiao Bai paused. “My *ge*’s been trolled a bunch of times.”

On the Korean server, players with *pinyin* IDs were silently acknowledged to be Chinese, so they would be targeted by a small portion of ill-mannered

Korean players.

Jian Rong's game ID wasn't written in *pinyin*, and his streaming hadn't taken off yet back when he used to play solely on the Korean server. To top it off, he never really chatted with his teammates in game, so he hadn't encountered many actors.

However, he knew that this sort of thing did happen. He had witnessed Chinese players being trolled and mocked before, and it was precisely because he had encountered an incident like this that his account had been banned for flaming. From that point on, he very rarely played on the Korean server again.

"It doesn't matter." Lu Boyuan tugged down the brim of his cap and closed his eyes for a nap. "Chinese or Korean server, it's all the same. If you meet one, just consider them a point-feeding dog. I'm gonna sleep for a bit, call me when we get there."

There were only three matches remaining in the spring season. The three teams that TTC hadn't played against yet were all of average strength, so as long as nobody made any major mistakes, they were basically assured victory.

They won today's match without any real suspense; the entire match altogether didn't even take an hour.

Once the match ended, Lu Boyuan was given MVP.

The one responsible for the interview was a male anchor known for being fond of stirring up trouble. After he asked a few standard questions, he

suddenly switched the subject. “With the latest Korean server patch, God Lu, you and your teammates should’ve all gone to practice on the Korean server as well, right?”

Lu Boyuan said, “They went.”

“Then God Lu, you…”

Lu Boyuan had just finished getting acupuncture, and the doctor had recommended for him not to use his hand before the day of the match. However, he naturally couldn’t state such a reason in front of the camera, so instead he said simply, “I forgot the password to my account and only got it back yesterday.”

The anchor laughed. “I see. I heard that Soft is currently aiming for rank one on the Korean server?”

Lu Boyuan cast a cool look at him.

That was something Jian Rong himself had said, that was true, but he had said it in his stream. To the water friends, it was merely a streamer’s typical boasting, nothing more.

But things were different for a match interview. After all, the LPL’s live broadcasts had quite a few international viewers, and its influence reached much farther.

Perhaps the anchor hadn’t realized the consequences of discussing this topic, or perhaps his goal was precisely to add fuel to the fire. The anchor

continued, “Lately, the Korean server can even be considered the gathering place for experts. Do you think Soft can accomplish it?”

In the break room, Ding-*ge* furiously pointed at the TV and cursed, “What kind of dumbass is this! It’s one thing to bring up the fucking Korean server during an LPL post-match interview! But then he also has to mention something a pro player said when talking big… this won’t do, I’m gonna have to call the person in charge, what the hell!”

Xiao Bai shook his head and said, “It’s over, it’s over, someone’s definitely going to dig out Jian Rong’s ID on the Korean server now.”

Yuan Qian: “Do they even need to dig? You forgot, his ID already has Soft in it.”

Xiao Bai contemplated for two seconds before he reached out and placed his hand on Jian Rong’s shoulder. “Jian Rong, a man of character is always ready to surrender or stand tall. Maybe you should change your Korean server ID once you get back…”

Jian Rong was sitting in a lazy way, and he didn’t bother turning his head. “Why do I have to change it?”

“With your current tier, it’s too easy for someone to snipe[2] you, those actors…”

It was as if Jian Rong had heard some joke. “Those famous actors on the Chinese server who have clearly marked prices of 7 *yuan* per point, I’ve run into them at least eight times before, if not ten. There’s also a whole bunch of people who instantly retaliate by feeding the moment their mood sours,

or immediately going AFK if they don't get the role they want to play. I've had someone who was flamed by me specially find a dozen people to come snipe me—if I can get rank one even on the Chinese server, why would I be scared of them?"

Xiao Bai: "……"

Even Pine, who was in the middle of playing Fight the Landlord, couldn't help but raise his hand and give Jian Rong a thumbs up.

Jian Rong didn't say anything else. He put on his hat and continued to watch Lu Boyuan's interview, his head tilted back.

Lu Boyuan's expression didn't change. He said evenly, "First of all, we'll play on any server, and it's my belief that every server has many experts.

"Second, I trust my teammates."

"Great, then we'll look forward to the day Soft reaches the peak of the Korean server. Also…"

"There's nothing to look forward to. Our goal isn't to be rank one on the Korean server, it's to be the world champion." Lu Boyuan's voice was calm, but his words were enough to explode the live broadcast's barrage. "Also, this is the LPL's post-match interview. If you're interested in our team member's ranking, you can schedule an individual interview in advance with our team's manager. That's all, thank you."

The camera urgently switched back to the commentators.

The three commentators looked a little awkward as they tried their hardest to hold back their laughter.

The broadcast's barrage was densely packed, as if this was the Spring Split finals.

[This anchor is making trouble again. Before, because he asked 98k in a post-match interview what his opinions were on his teammates from his old competitive league, he was demoted for almost two years before he could come back. Who would've expected him to stir things up again before the regular season's even finished… as expected, you can't stop a dog from eating shit.]

[Can he straight up retire this time? I'm tired of him, just perish.]

[I think this is the first time God Lu has gotten angry in front of the camera…]

[No way, this can be called 'getting angry'??]

[Thankfully Soft wasn't MVP this time, or else it truly would be very hard to accept if he didn't get in a fist fight with the anchor.]

[I can already imagine the scene of Soft being crazily sniped by those Korean server actors…]

[Every LPL pro player has been sniped before, right? Never mind the LPL, they'll even troll their own league's players. In that respect, the Korean and Chinese servers are very similar, I'm not sure where the idea of the Korean server being good-mannered came from.]

[Damn, that means Soft's streams will definitely be very exciting from now on, I'm gonna go follow his account.]

[It won't be that exciting, he constantly encounters actors on the domestic server too. Now *laozi* is just worried that… will he be banned or suspended from competing for insulting someone on the Korean server? I'm afraid that if my son stays in the Korean server for two days, he's going to get hit in the face with a huge 99-day competition ban gift.]

[Fuck, you woke me right up…]

[Fans of TTC – suddenly scared!]

Right as Lu Boyuan went off stage, Ding-*ge* was already waiting for him at the doorway.

"You head back to the break room first to pack up your peripherals." Ding-*ge* was glowering. "I'm waiting to talk to someone in charge here."

Although Ding-*ge* always told them not to check public forums and to keep a low profile, he had zero tolerance for his team's players being screwed over or swept up in rumors.

Just like when someone had tried to stab Jian Rong last time; even though Ding-*ge* had taken care of things in a low-key manner on the surface, in private he had kept a closer eye than anyone else on the overall process.

When Lu Boyuan got back to the break room, Xiao Bai and the rest were already passionately surfing through Tieba.

Jian Rong was also jabbing away at his phone, head lowered.

Lu Boyuan walked over to Xiao Bai and nudged his shoe, indicating for him to move over. Xiao Bai obediently scooted to the side.

Jian Rong was currently participating in a serious insulting match with a hater who said that Lu Boyuan had shamelessly spurred the netizens to cancel the anchor during the interview.

After he skillfully finished typing out his message, he added a taunting smiling emoji and hit send.

A familiar voice came from his right. “Xiao Bai spent money and hired several dozen people to help him clear up rumors on Tieba before, 0.5 *yuan* per comment.”

Jian Rong: “…”

“With your skill level…” Lu Boyuan paused briefly. “I can give you ten *yuan* per comment? Is that enough?”

Jian Rong had washed his hands of his old lifestyle for quite a while now. On this rare occasion, he had left the secluded mountain to barge into Tieba once more and had been caught in the act again.

Jian Rong stiffly locked his phone before he lifted his hand and scratched at the brim of his hat.

He was wearing the hat from before again, the one with ‘Road’ written on the right side.

A long moment later, Jian Rong finally said, “For other people, I charge 80 per comment.”

Then he glanced around, and after confirming that the others were all playing on their phones, he said quickly, “…for you, it’s free.”

Just as he said that, Ding-*ge* pushed open the break room door. Judging from his expression, he had given them a solid scolding.

He waved his hand and said in a bold voice, “Come on, I’ll take you guys to eat out!”

Instantly, the other three people happily got up and left.

Jian Rong also stood up. He slung his equipment bag over his shoulder before he reached out to get Lu Boyuan’s, only for Lu Boyuan to grab his wrist from where he was still sitting.

Lu Boyuan looked at him. “We don’t have any practice matches tonight, what do you want to do when you go back?”

Jian Rong subconsciously glanced at the other team members and replied quietly, “Play ranked.”

Lu Boyuan said, “There’s no rush.”

Jian Rong went silent as he recalled the comments from a few certain dumbasses on Tieba. He started to say that it was very urgent.

“Since you joined the team, aside from those days during Lunar New Year, it seems like you haven’t really left the base.” In a lowered voice, Lu Boyuan

negotiated with him, “How about we don’t eat with them, and I’ll take you out to have some fun?”

Translation Notes

1. *So Jian Rong is writing in pinyin here (not Chinese characters) – everything in italics is when they’re communicating using pinyin* ^
2. *I think Xiao Bai is talking about stream sniping here, when you purposefully watch someone’s stream to queue at the same time as them (and then probably try to ruin their game)* ^

Yan: Yes it’s a date uwu (also I absolutely live for the moments Jian Rong is being ruthless, fly high my little fearless son)

(*edit*) **Wei**: Me: why is no one commenting on this chapter. Also me: disabled comments. Sorry friends should be fixed now LOL

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 87: Jian Rong tasted the flavor of orange candy.

Every member of TTC had a clean shirt packed in their equipment bag. That way, it was a little more convenient for them to eat out at a restaurant or do other things after a match.

Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan had both brought white short-sleeved shirts. They sat in the backseat of the car they had called via an app, wearing the black masks that Ding-*ge* had forcefully stuffed in their hands before they left.

The temperature outside was warming up again, but in order to save money, the taxi drivers didn't turn on air conditioning until the heat of summer hit. At a red light, the driver couldn't resist glancing in the rearview mirror.

Though both of the guys were securely covered up, it wasn't hard to tell that they had superior facial features, especially the taller one on the right, with the broad shoulders and long legs. According to the driver's past experiences… they seemed like celebrities.

Something else was also quite odd. His car was an SUV, and the backseat was spacious, meaning there was more than enough room for them to each take a side. But the two guys were still sitting shoulder-to-shoulder, with a black backpack placed on the far right seat instead.

The taller guy suddenly looked up at him, and the driver hurriedly withdrew his gaze.

Jian Rong didn't notice this brief interlude. During his livestream yesterday, he had promised his water friends that he would be streaming gameplay on the Korean server for the next several nights.

So at that current moment, he was in the middle of posting on Weibo. The content of the post was simple—[TTC · Soft: No stream tonight.]

In less than a few minutes, over 200 comments had popped up, cursing him out and saying that he was breaking his promise, going back on his word, had no ambition, and wasn't a man.

Jian Rong thought, *If I rejected Lu Boyuan and went back to the base to stream, then I really wouldn't be a man.*

The last comment he spotted before he locked his phone was one from a fan asking him what he was going to do if he wasn't streaming.

Jian Rong hesitated for two seconds, locked his phone, and cast a glance outside the window.

Going on a date—did this count as one?

Apart from the members' underwear and socks, the auntie washed all their other clothing for them together in the washing machine and then hung them up to dry, which was why their clothes all smelled like the same laundry detergent.

Lu Boyuan's legs were long, so it actually wasn't very comfortable for him to sit in the middle seat. Luckily, this was a big car. One of Lu Boyuan's legs

was carelessly bent, while the other one slanted towards Jian Rong, his knee pressing against Jian Rong's leg without any real force.

Jian Rong tensed his legs and didn't move an inch. He stared absent-mindedly out the window until Lu Boyuan spoke.

Lu Boyuan looked up from his phone. "Suisui's mom is also at the clinic."

Jian Rong was caught off guard. "Who's Suisui?"

Lu Boyuan said mildly, "The little female cat."

Jian Rong: "..."

Little Orange was the one in the wrong here, and Jian Rong was the worst at handling this sort of thing. He frowned. "Then how much money should we compensate her with in a bit?"

Lu Boyuan: "It won't cost that much, don't worry."

Jian Rong nodded. A few seconds later, he mumbled, "What do we do with the kittens after they're born."

He had been contemplating this problem for a very long time.

The survival rate for stray kittens was extremely low, and even fewer could survive long enough to grow up properly. If Jian Rong still lived in his former neighborhood, he probably would've bitten the bullet and taken them in himself. Yuan Qian was allergic to cats, so he couldn't bring them back to the base... under the current circumstances, he couldn't just leave all the kittens at the animal clinic either.

“The clinic should be able to help find people to adopt them.” Lu Boyuan paused. “Or I can bring them back to my house to take care of.”

Slightly stunned, Jian Rong turned to look at him.

“My mom likes raising small animals. Pigs, geese, dogs, turtles, she’s kept them all at some point or another. I wanted to bring Little Orange back before, but if I did, it wouldn’t be convenient for you to see him, so I let it go.” Lu Boyuan lowered his eyes and casually straightened Jian Rong’s crooked mask with a light tug. “Now it’s possible.”

The cats can stay in the house, you can come visit my home.

Jian Rong was already used to bottling up his problems, used to handling matters by himself, even though he frequently made a complete mess doing so.

But ever since he met Lu Boyuan, many issues seemed to become much easier to resolve.

He didn’t know if this was a good thing. Jian Rong stared at the bridge of Lu Boyuan’s nose for a while before he said, “…mn.”

Suisui’s parent was a young woman in her twenties. She gripped her phone, one hand on her hip, and stood in the animal clinic as she sent a voice message to her best friends: “So unlucky, I only left her here for two days, and Suisui was bullied by that terrible, shameless orange cat… of course, the clinic compensated me, and the orange cat’s owner did too, but I still feel angry…”

The front door was pushed open, and the young woman whipped her head around aggressively. When she saw two cute guys walk in one after another, she immediately cut off the voice message.

Little Orange, who had been locked up by the clinic on his own, peered through the glass of the cage before he leisurely got up, yawned, and stretched. Then he shifted a tiny bit towards Jian Rong, as if he had recognized his "owner."

Jian Rong's family-cleansing mood lightened a bit.

He cast his eyes downward and walked over to the cage with a sour expression on his face, before he stuck his index finger in through the cage's opening. "Stupid cat, you've grown up, huh."

Little Orange walked towards the opening. Halfway there, he came to a halt and meowed at Lu Boyuan, who was standing outside the glass with both hands stuffed in his pockets.

Lu Boyuan stopped for a second before he reached out with his hand and pressed it half-heartedly against the glass.

Through the glass, Little Orange rubbed against Lu Boyuan's fingers. "*Meow~*"

Jian Rong: "…"

From now on, *laozi*'s gonna scatter that cat food, toss it, feed it to that black dog from the neighboring street; no matter what, there won't be any left for you.

The animal clinic director showed up soon after, and they started to discuss the final proposed solution for the situation.

Suisui's owner eased up quite a bit in terms of her attitude. She raised her head and glanced at the two people next to her. The taller guy's face was covered up too well, so she couldn't see much, but the one with blue hair had tugged his mask under his chin—he was good-looking, so good-looking.

Even that little orange cat in the cage seemed much more pleasing to the eye.

"How about this, we'll go with the same compensation amount we settled on before." Suisui's owner voiced her goal for this meeting: "But all the kittens will belong to me. That won't be a problem, right?"

Jian Rong furrowed his brows hesitantly. "Are you going to raise them or sell them?"

The young woman said calmly, "It depends. If they're pretty, of course I'll send them to earn some money, but if they're ugly, I'll keep them myself or I'll give them to other people. You can relax, regardless of whether I sell them or give them away, I'll inspect the other party's living situation first."

The matter was much simpler to resolve than Jian Rong had imagined.

When it came time to pay the compensation fee, Jian Rong was about to ask for her Alipay when the young woman coughed and took out her phone. "How about you transfer it to me through WeChat? Should I add you, or will you add me?"

Jian Rong felt like doing it this way was a little troublesome, but he still pulled out his phone. “I…”

Lu Boyuan, who was sitting next to Jian Rong and hadn’t participated in the discussion at all, suddenly lifted his hand and lightly covered the screen of Jian Rong’s phone. “We have some money saved on an account with the clinic, they’ll transfer it directly to you.”

The young woman was startled.

She blinked and looked at the two guys sitting extremely close together before she looked at their overlapping hands. Understanding abruptly dawned on her.

Once everything was settled, the young woman got up and pretended to browse through the kitty products. In reality, she secretly snuck a picture of their backs and sent it in the chat with her besties.

“Fuck, a beautiful dream is shattered, the orange cat’s owner is gay.”

A sister: “Then isn’t it hopeless for you?”

“It is.”

“But they really fit so well together, it makes me feel like it doesn’t matter if I’m still single for a bit longer.”

…

By the time they left the animal clinic, the sky was dusky and the air was humid. It just happened to be around dinnertime, and the restaurants lining

the street bustled with customers. Waves of thick mist wafted up from opened steamer baskets, blurring the faces of the passersby.

Lu Boyuan asked, “What do you want to eat?”

“I’ll treat you.” Jian Rong drew himself back from the fragrant aroma coming from the nearby stall. “I’m more familiar with this street than you are.”

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. Originally, he wanted to take Jian Rong to the city center and eat there, that way they could stroll around the area as well.

He forgot that Jian Rong’s home was just one street over from this clinic, and that he had lived here for eighteen years.

“Okay.”

The district where Jian Rong lived actually didn’t really have any fancy restaurants, so he led Lu Boyuan over to the noodle shop that he used to frequent in the past. When he saw the boss roaring out the orders inside the shop, he suddenly realized that this wasn’t a suitable location for a date.

The boss spotted Jian Rong through the door. Jian Rong nodded in his direction before he turned his head and asked, “Do you want to eat Japanese food or barbeque?”

Lu Boyuan’s bag was slung over one shoulder as he withdrew his gaze from the shop. “I want to eat noodles.”

“…”

Two bowls of scallion oil noodles arrived at their table.

Lu Boyuan discovered that their bowls were filled with more noodles than that of any of the other customers.

“You’ve finally shown your face again.” The noodle shop boss placed his hands on his hips and said, “I brought some noodles and went to knock on your door the other day, but nobody ever answered.”

Jian Rong was momentarily startled. “Did you need something?”

“No, I just wanted to see why you weren’t coming to eat here anymore. You used to come here quite a few times per week before… also, since you live on your own, I was worried that nobody would even know if something happened to you.” The noodle shop boss glanced back and responded to another customer before he waved his hand. “As long as you’re doing all right, that’s good. I’ll get back to it, you guys go ahead and eat.”

After the boss left, Jian Rong was still somewhat in a daze.

This restaurant was even older than Jian Rong was. His parents often took him to eat noodles here back when he was very young.

Once the accident happened, he became a streamer for the sake of his livelihood and shut himself up inside his home to work. If he came out to eat noodles, he would only silently point at the menu; he never exchanged more than five sentences with the boss during a visit. Four or five years passed just like that. In fact, he couldn’t even remember the boss’ nickname too well anymore.

Jian Rong ducked his head and pressed his lips together. As he mixed his noodles, he said, “Give it a try, if you don’t like it, I’ll take you to eat somewhere else…”

Slurp—

Jian Rong lifted his head and saw Lu Boyuan inhale a huge mouthful of noodles, causing one of his cheeks to bulge with food.

Lu Boyuan’s table manners were casual, but not sloppy.

The scallion oil noodles were indeed delicious. No wonder it could make a person who streamed for thirteen hours a day leave his house several times a week.

They felt particularly satisfied after their dinner of noodles. There was also a little wooden dish placed on the table, filled with candy and gum.

They each picked a different flavor. By the time they left the restaurant, it had already started to rain outside.

The spring rain was light and lingering. It didn’t appear to be raining very hard, but if someone stood in it for more than a few seconds, they would end up completely drenched.

They went to the store next door to buy an umbrella. With it propped open, they slowly made their way over to the taxi stand.

The buildings in this area were all somewhat older, and the streets were narrow as well. It was quieter here than it was downtown, but livelier than

the villa district.

Carrying the umbrella, Lu Boyuan asked out of the blue, “Back when you were streaming, did you live by yourself the entire time?”

Jian Rong said, “Mn.”

“I remember that streamers basically don’t earn any income during the first few months.” Lu Boyuan paused. “Where did you get the money for your living expenses? Your family?”

Jian Rong had never told anyone how he had grown up, so before he spoke, he had to take a few seconds to organize his words.

“No, there was no one in my family to give me any.”

Jian Rong wasn’t a very dramatic person. Perhaps it was because too much time had passed, but when he talked about these things, his voice was quite calm, with no hint of sorrow or feeling wronged whatsoever.

“My parents left behind some money, and then… I would participate in tournaments while streaming. At the time, the internet cafe tournaments didn’t have an age restriction, and the prizes were also average. It was rarely ever cash, mostly just set meals or instant noodles. And I was really trash back then too, so the highest I ever got was second place.”

Lu Boyuan didn’t continue his line of questioning. He thought back to what Jian Rong had looked like when he was younger, but he could only recall Jian Rong being short and skinny, with an extremely grumpy expression on his face due to the internet cafe boss’ rejection.

And when he was being a little scalper and haggling over prices with someone, he had looked a little in need of a smacking.

After walking for some distance, Jian Rong couldn't help but ask, "Why aren't you saying anything?"

"No reason." Lu Boyuan said, "I was thinking."

Jian Rong: "Thinking about what?"

Lu Boyuan: "Back at the entrance to the internet cafe, why didn't I buy you some more food."

Actually, Lu Boyuan was thinking about far more than just that, but he didn't say it out loud.

"..." Originally, Jian Rong hadn't thought much of it, but when Lu Boyuan mentioned that, a rush of sudden emotions swept through his mind. He swiftly blinked a few times, scattering those feelings. "It's a good thing you didn't buy any, or else I probably would've ended up selling it as part of a package deal with the entrance ticket."

Lu Boyuan gave a very light laugh.

The rain came down harder and harder, and they couldn't call a taxi or a ride from an app. They had no choice but to sit down underneath the overhang of a convenience store and wait.

The large screen outside of the small-scale shopping center across from them started playing a commercial from a certain famous athletic brand.

The man in the commercial was currently sitting right next to Jian Rong, in the middle of sending a message to Ding-*ge* to ask for a car to come get them.

A few young women came to a halt in front of Jian Rong and finished watching that twenty-second commercial with him.

"*Ai*, today's yet another day I want to sleep with Road."

"Please get in line."

"Stop dreaming, an insider told me that Road is even harder to get with than an idol. He's not somebody an ordinary person can sleep with…"

Sensing Jian Rong's gaze on him, Lu Boyuan inclined his head to the side. "What's the matter."

At first, Jian Rong shook his head. After a while, he couldn't resist leaning in and asking, "Did you hear what those girls were talking about?"

Lu Boyuan said, "You can."

Jian Rong froze, still looking at Lu Boyuan, as his brain churned sluggishly.

Road is even harder to get with than an idol, he's not somebody an ordinary person can sleep with.

You can.

There were hardly any pedestrians on the street. Jian Rong's face burned, his heart thumping away to a beat as fine as the spring rain.

Lu Boyuan watched him, amused, and raised his hand. “Your ears…”

Jian Rong: “But right now I seem to be stuck at the first step still.”

Lu Boyuan’s hand stopped midair. “What?”

“Just, you’ve only kissed me on the nose before.” Jian Rong’s eyes were dark and luminous. He paused for a second and licked his lips. “And you won’t let me into your room either.”

“…”

A beat later, Lu Boyuan sent the text that he had typed out. Then, he slipped his phone into his pocket and opened the black umbrella that they had just purchased.

Jian Rong subconsciously reached for the strap of his equipment bag. “Is the car here…”

The rest of his words were concealed in the rain.

The umbrella covered them from the front, and both of their masks were tucked underneath their chins. Lu Boyuan tilted his head and leaned in, pressing his lips against Jian Rong’s.

Jian Rong was stunned. Instantly, his entire body stiffened, and his hand tightened around the backpack strap.

The umbrella was quite large, with a wall on one side of them and a vending machine on the other, acting as shelter. From the outside, they just looked

like two young men who were extremely afraid of getting soaked, so they used an umbrella to block the rain from splashing in.

The big screen across from them started playing Lu Boyuan's commercial again.

Behind the black umbrella, Lu Boyuan kissed him very gently, until Jian Rong finally recovered. He released the bag strap and grabbed onto Lu Boyuan's shirt instead. Though fearful of being discovered by someone outside, he still responded clumsily and frantically.

The sound of the rain pattered around them as their breaths tangled together. The beep of a car horn rang out, and Jian Rong tasted the flavor of orange candy inside Lu Boyuan's mouth.

Yan: Yeeeeeeee Jian Rong go get your man this is one of my favorite chapters (as you can probably tell why)

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 88: .

Thank you to poodadoe for the Ko-fi!

On the night of a certain stream, a very long time ago. Jian Rong bluntly rejected a female accompanying gamer's request to tag team the bot lane together, his voice cold and detached enough to make someone's hair stand on end. Bored and lacking anything better to do, the water friends started speculating about his future romantic partner, while also roasting this dumbass for how he would act when he eventually dated someone.

Some of them said that he should find a girl with an irritable temper so that they could flame each other every day while streaming; others said that he would definitely find a mild and weak little white rabbit. There were also a few antis who tried to stir up trouble by claiming that he was destined to become an abuser.

At the time, Jian Rong hadn't responded to a single one of those comments. He felt like dating was something that was very far off for him. He couldn't think of anyone he would want to stay in one room with, nor had he ever met someone who he especially wanted to get to know and talk to.

But right now, he was squeezed behind an umbrella with a guy who was even taller and broader than he was.

Upon hearing a passerby complain about the drizzle, Jian Rong's pulse quickened a beat, and he gripped Lu Boyuan's shirt even tighter, his

fingernails suffused with white from nervousness.

Worried that Jian Rong's clothes would rub against the glass wall of the convenience store behind them, which was covered with droplets of rain, Lu Boyuan placed his other hand on Jian Rong's waist.

Jian Rong's lips were very soft, and they tasted like peppermint-flavored gum as they moved against Lu Boyuan's with an eager, impatient inexperience.

Lu Boyuan's heart itched from Jian Rong's kisses, and he also wanted to laugh. As a result, he drew back just a bit.

The moment their lips separated, Lu Boyuan cast his eyes downward and happened to spot Jian Rong's half-opened eyes. A second later, Jian Rong clutched at Lu Boyuan's clothing and shifted forward, leaning in again.

…

Ding-*ge*'s call came in. He said that he was driving to get them himself, and that he would be there in three minutes, so they should stand in an area where he could temporarily park.

Lu Boyuan lifted his hand and tugged his mask back into place before he told Ding-*ge* that there was already an area he could stop at right in front of them.

Jian Rong stayed frozen in his original position. He appeared to be listening to Lu Boyuan's phone call, but in reality, his brain was currently replaying the last few minutes, his ears completely red.

Just now, did he pull Lu Boyuan back in so that he could kiss him again?

…

Fuck.

The instant they put away the umbrella, a shiny black Bentley Mulsanne came to a stop at the edge of the street, drawing numerous glances from everyone in the nearby vicinity.

The car window rolled down. Ding-*ge*, who was wearing sunglasses, jerked his chin up at them.

Before anyone could ask, Ding-*ge* began chattering away unprompted the moment the door opened. "Fu-*ge* bought a new car and left this car at the base for us to use. Isn't it awesome?"

Jian Rong said without any emotion whatsoever, "Awesome."

Ding-*ge*: "…little spoiled brats don't know what's what."

By this time, it was already past off-work rush hour. They drove unimpeded for half the trip before they finally encountered a red light and stopped.

Ding-*ge* turned his head, wanting to say something, but instead his eyes were drawn to the hems of Jian Rong's pant legs. "Why are the bottoms of your pant legs so wet? Got caught in the rain?"

He looked Jian Rong up and down a few times, puzzled. "You didn't get wet anywhere else…"

Jian Rong: "…"

Of course he didn't get caught in the rain. It was soaked because of the rainwater that had dripped off of the surface of the umbrella earlier when they were using it as a cover-up.

He had been solely focused on doing something else, so he hadn't pulled his legs back from where they had been tautly stretched out. Only after they were done kissing did he realize that his pant legs were drenched.

Jian Rong said woodenly, "It got wet from me playing in the puddles."

"…" Ding-*ge* twisted his head to look at Lu Boyuan and was startled again. "Damn, just what kind of fun did you two have? For your clothes to be so wrinkled??"

In the wake of Ding-*ge*'s words, Jian Rong glanced over.

The bottom right corner of Lu Boyuan's shirt was thoroughly wrinkled. Jian Rong was grasping that patch of fabric the entire time earlier, and currently, it looked like it had been placed in a washing basin and trampled over by countless people.

Lu Boyuan savored the cool traces of peppermint remaining in his mouth and said, "A cat scratched it."

Jian Rong: "…"

The light changed to green. Ding-*ge* quickly faced forward and stepped on the gas. "What kind of cat is so incredible that it can make your shirt look

like that… also, why are you two still wearing your masks in the car? Do you know how much each bottle of Fu-*ge*'s car fragrance costs? It's even more expensive than my wife's perfume, take off your masks and smell it!"

Lu Boyuan said, deadpan, "Then shouldn't you be reflecting on yourself?"

Ding-*ge* choked and swore good-naturedly before he concentrated on driving.

Back at the base, Ding-*ge* waved a hand at Jian Rong. "You should go change your clothes. Isn't it uncomfortable for your pants to be that wet?"

Jian Rong went upstairs reluctantly, glancing behind him every few steps.

Lu Boyuan took off his mask. "Have something to say?"

They had known each other for quite a few years now, so Ding-*ge* didn't bother beating around the bush with him. He moved closer and asked quietly, "Did you start dating recently?"

Lu Boyuan went motionless for a second before he looked calmly at Ding-*ge*.

"I knew it." Ding-*ge*'s expression was complicated. "With who? Someone in the circle?"

Lu Boyuan's eyebrows unfurrowed slightly, and he asked in lieu of an answer, "How did you find out."

"It was way too obvious." Ding-*ge* said, "Who would switch their profile picture to a female cat for no reason?"

"…"

"Also, usually you aren't even willing to go to a restaurant after a match, yet today, you immediately changed clothes backstage and left." Ding-*ge* paused. "Shit, your lip… is split."

Lu Boyuan pressed the back of his hand against his mouth. The skin on his bottom lip was broken. "Accidentally bit down on it."

"Enough, who could accidentally bite down on that spot." Ding-*ge* thought of something, causing his brows to knit together. "Though I've told you before that you should keep a low profile when dating so that you don't drive away all your girlfriend fans, that doesn't mean you have to go so far as to…"

Ding-*ge* shot a glance in the direction of the stairs and finished, "As to take Soft along to act as a shield."

Lu Boyuan went silent for a brief moment before he repeated, "A shield?"

"Was that not the case? Then why else would you bring him along on your date?"

After Ding-*ge* said that, he himself was dumbfounded for two seconds.

Out of nowhere, he recalled Jian Rong's orange cat profile picture, before he remembered the strange conversation they had inside the car.

When Lu Boyuan saw his expression, he didn't say anything to interrupt Ding-*ge*'s train of thought.

Quite a while later, Ding-*ge* slowly asked again, "…you're really in a relationship?"

Lu Boyuan said, "Mn."

"With…" A guy or a girl.

The latter half of Ding-*ge*'s sentence was cut off by the sound of footsteps as Xiao Bai and Pine came downstairs. He had no choice but to swallow down everything he was going to say, and he ultimately could only ask in a rushed, suppressed whisper, "You're serious?"

Lu Boyuan asked lazily, "What do you think?"

At that, Ding-*ge* realized in retrospect that his own question was a bit foolish.

If Lu Boyuan wanted to become a pro gamer, he would insist on doing so even if his family opposed him; he wouldn't turn back even if he had to go hungry or live in a worn-down dorm.

If he wanted to bring his team to victory, he would stay up all night practicing as hard as he could. When his hands grew so sore that he couldn't lift them up, he would go get acupuncture, bloodletting therapy, or cortisone shots, never once complaining about the exhaustion or pain.

Over the course of the several years of his professional career, the number of female fans who liked him could line up from Shanghai to Beijing. There were people with all sorts of appearances, from all sorts of industries, but Lu Boyuan hadn't given any of them a chance.

Lu Boyuan treated both people and decisions alike with gravitas. If he was dating someone, it meant that he truly liked them.

Ding-*ge*: "Then you two…"

"We just started, it's not stabilized yet." Lu Boyuan picked up his hat and headed upstairs, tossing behind him, "Don't worry, it won't affect training."

Damn.

It wouldn't affect whose training???

Ding-*ge* stood rooted to the spot and decided not to continue that line of thought, in case he wouldn't ever be able to fall asleep again after today.

Jian Rong took a shower after returning to his room. While he was brushing his teeth, he scrolled through Tieba, wanting to find a troll to chat a bit with so that he could calm down.

Before he could find someone, their team's WeChat group chat chimed first.

[P-Baby's Little Support: [p-baby's little support is calling you to order takeout together~] Barbeque, come order quickly if you want to eat it!]

[Ding-*ge*: ?]

[Ding-*ge*: Are you a pig? Didn't I just take you all out to eat Japanese cuisine costing 5,000+ *yuan* this afternoon??]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Our match ended so early today, it's already been six hours since I last ate, isn't it normal for me to be hungry?!]

[Ding-*ge*: …]

[Yuan Qian: I ordered, get it super spicy for me.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Okey-dokey! Don't worry, this store's chili peppers are extremely vigorous, @R-ong @R do you guys want anything?]

[R-ong: No]

[R: Can't eat it, you guys order.]

Jian Rong paused in the middle of brushing his teeth and subconsciously asked—

[R-ong: Why can't you eat it?]

[Ding-*ge*: …]

Ten or so seconds later.

[R: My lip is split.]

Jian Rong nearly put on a '*swallowing mouth-rinsing water*' show for himself in the mirror.

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 89: Hurry up and take your mid laner away.

Jian Rong dreamt the entire night.

Training was too tiring, removing the entertainment factor of streaming and running basic drills for skills like last hitting grew somewhat tedious after a while. Since Jian Rong joined the team, he had been dreaming almost every single day.

Thoughts during the day manifested as dreams at night. In his dreams from back when he streamed, he traded insults with the water friends online and challenged them to fights in real life. After entering the team, he solo killed countless professional mid laners in his dreams, and the day he met Fu-*ge*, he dreamed of receiving a car.

That night, Jian Rong dreamed that he and Lu Boyuan were in the dark alley next to the convenience store.

No pedestrians, no car horns, no Ding-*ge*.

Upon waking up, Jian Rong's first instinct was to seize that bird chirping incessantly away outside and bring it back to turn it into soup.

He rubbed his eyes, picked up his other pillow, and covered his face with it.

…why did he have to wake up.

He changed his clothes and went downstairs. At that moment, only he and the auntie were awake in the base.

Five minutes later, Jian Rong sat down in front of his computer, carrying his breakfast. As he stared at the monitor, he chewed on his bread and let his thoughts run wild.

The new patch was officially coming out today on the Korean server. Among the mid lane champions, Katarina and Diana had both been buffed.

LeBlanc was nerfed a bit, but it didn't affect her terrifying DPS in the early and mid game.

Zac was heavily buffed, but Lu Boyuan didn't seem to really enjoy playing that jungle champion.

The champions Lu Boyuan liked to play were all on the ban lists.

Whenever one of Lu Boyuan's champions was banned, he would press his lips together once. That was a small detail Jian Rong had noticed before as he was watching the matches.

Lu Boyuan's lips were somewhat thin.

Kissing them felt really good……. fuck.

Jian Rong wolfed down his bread and rubbed his face before he started streaming.

Recently, Jian Rong's follower count had shot up to be among the platform's top five. Every time he streamed, a lot of people flooded in, but it was evidently even livelier today than it had ever been in the past.

TTC's crushing victory in their spring season match last night was no longer a hot topic of discussion anymore, but the comment section underneath the Weibo of the anchor responsible for the post-match interview was still a battlefield.

Many comments from Korean social media sites had already been transported in, and none of them said anything nice. Even now, the topics #Road calling out the anchor# and #when will Soft play on the Korean server# were still hanging onto the bottom of the hot search.

Someone on Tieba even made a record of what happened the hour after the match concluded. Jian Rong's livestream room gained 120,000 new followers without him starting a single stream, and the amount of people online and present in the livestream room immediately skyrocketed the stream onto the popularity charts. The water friends and passersby who came to watch the show waited eagerly, full of anticipation—

And ended up receiving news of the bird flying the coop.

Now the bird had returned to the coop. The water friends were extremely agitated.

[Fucking hell, when *laozi*'s marriage proposal was rejected, I wasn't even as sad as I was yesterday when you cancelled on us.]

[Xiao Bai and Qian both streamed yesterday night, which meant that TTC didn't have any practice matches. Dad checked the match histories for all seven of your accounts, you didn't play on your Chinese or Korean accounts. Explain, what did you go do last night?]

[Tell me, what's more important right now than you climbing to rank one on the KR server???]

[Little dumbass, quite a few streamers were waiting to snipe you on the Korean server last night. They waited the entire night before they finally found out that you had cancelled, and they even used a translator to translate your Weibo post, I really fucking died laughing]

[If you don't become rank one on the Korean server within three days, it'll truly be very hard to come back from this]

[What a joke, it was just a bluff, do you all really think he can climb up there? The current rank one is Master. Unless he abandons his account and stops playing, who could possibly climb past him?]

[Ha the Korean dogs are here, are you HT's dog?]

[That person was telling the truth ah. Master's the world's best mid laner, nobody can deny that, right?]

[A ranking on a server isn't representative of a pro player's strength, OK? A piece of trivia: three months ago, Road's domestic server account was Diamond 5.]

Jian Rong glanced at the barrage before he chewed on his milk straw and pulled up a web page.

[Why the hell is a killer drinking milk? Quickly log onto the Korean server and massacre them!]

[Why are you going onto Baidu?]

["What to put on a split lip"… what part of your lip is busted?]

[You need Baidu even for a split lip, you crazy?]

[How are you any different from those patients I've encountered who come in seeking emergency treatment for a flesh wound? I just happen to be on a break right now, move your mouth closer to the camera so Dad can take a look.]

Jian Rong unlocked his phone and instantly bought all the ointments that the Baidu page said could be used, two tubes of every brand.

After completing his purchase, he opened the game accelerator at last. "I was busy, so I cancelled.

"Busy with what… something big, a personal matter, not telling.

"It was more important than climbing to rank one on the Korean server."

There was a terrifying number of comments in the barrage, and the room mods couldn't even block everything they needed to block. Jian Rong checked the time. "Why are there so many people here today? Did the platform give me a boost?"

[They all came over from the hot search.]

[Everyone's waiting to see you slaughter the Korean server dogs, yet instead you come here and Baidu what to do with a split lip… before when you fell and ate shit and your arm was bleeding, you just wiped it with a

napkin and then sat back down to continue streaming. How come you've become a prince now after going to TTC?]

[My son got on the hot search with a single 'climbing to rank one on the Korean server'? Full of fire, Daddy is relieved.]

"Hot search? What hot search?"

With the help of the water friends, Jian Rong opened Weibo and looked through it. "Our coach probably bought it…"

His phone chimed. Ding-*ge*, who was stalking the stream the entire time, sent a text over: [I didn't, don't make up rumors about me.]

"…" Jian Rong set his phone down. "Stop spamming, I'll start playing now. Didn't I only cancel for one night? I'll stream all of today to make up for it."

Right as he logged in, Savior sent him a party invite.

Jian Rong declined. Before he could type out anything, the invite came again.

Another decline. Another invite.

After five consecutive back and forths, Jian Rong entered the lobby. "We play the same role."

"Aye want to talk to you." Savior expressed, "Aye kin support or top lane."

Jian Rong, who had just checked Savior's match history: "Are you not aware at all how trash your top lane is."

Savior: "……"

The barrage exploded with laughter, and Ding-*ge*'s text rushed in at the speed of light—[He just finished experiencing cyberbullying, and he lost 13 games in a row too, can't you word things a little more gently?!]

Jian Rong glanced at the Savior fans cursing him out in the barrage, along with the anti-fans who faithfully clocked into his stream every day to report him, and thought: *Who exactly is the one experiencing cyberbullying right now, huh*.

Jian Rong clicked his tongue and said, "Whatever, start queueing. But get ready to continue your losing streak."

Both of them were currently on the snipe list for Korean server trolls. He didn't even have to think about it to know how challenging it would be to climb today.

Although Savior had dropped to Master tier, both his and Jian Rong's accounts had high hidden rankings. They queued for quite some time without getting into a game.

Out of nowhere, Savior hit him with: "You're very brave."

Jian Rong: "Thank you for the compliment."

"…" Savior enunciated with difficulty, "Korean flamers are even more fierce than Chinese ones, don't feel sad—"

“BS.” Jian Rong interrupted him. “Just them? Tell them to come find me, I’ll give them a head start of ten sentences.”

“…”

[???]

[No way, sir, is this a competition too??]

[You’re very proud of yourself, aren’t you?]

After they finally entered a game, before Jian Rong could even get a chance to check his role, he heard a *thunk* as one of their teammates banned Teemo.

Savior said, “Aye can be the one to leave this game.”

Jian Rong frowned. “Why leave?”

Savior said, “Our team’s ADC is an actor, trolled meh twice already.”

Jian Rong was the mid laner in this game, and Savior got support.

“Leaving because of one actor, just how many points do you have to lose?” Jian Rong picked Talon. “Choose a damage dealer support.”

Savior was startled. “Ah.”

“Treat it like the mid lane.” Jian Rong paused for a moment. “Steal his minions, steal his kills, betray him—got it?”

[……are you trying to get Savior and the actor to mutually troll each other?? Is this allowed?]

[An old strategy, wicked people can be tormented by other wicked people. All the actors this dumbass has pissed off in the domestic server can't even fit in a truck.]

[This kind of dirty trick… please be sure to give many pointers to our little Savior! QAQ he's really so pitiful ah he's been trolled for an entire week now]

The players on the opposing team clearly recognized Jian Rong. Less than ten minutes after the game started, the enemy jungler had already "considerately attended to" Jian Rong's mid lane twice.

But they didn't successfully gank him either time, and Jian Rong recalled back to base with low health. When he came out, he continued to suppress the enemy under their tower as he beat them up.

The enemy jungler seemed to have taken offense to that. As a result, they rushed over again at level 7—just in time to see their mid laner be solo killed by Jian Rong. Jian Rong even stayed for a few scant milliseconds under the tower to flash an icon at them before he flipped over the wall and left.

[My head's dizzy from all the outplays, can I look forward to Talon making an appearance on the competitive stage??]

[Promise me, you definitely have to participate in the All-Star solo tournament this year.]

[What's going on, everyone else comes over to the Korean server because they want to practice against highly skilled players, so how come when the dumbass comes here, he ends up becoming fiercer and fiercer instead?]

"Don't make up nonsense, my coach is spying on the stream… of course I can't pick Talon during a match, this champion doesn't conform with the current meta's core values." After Jian Rong said that, he checked the scoreboard and questioned, "Why did you let the ADC's CS get so high?"

Savior let out an "ah." "But he steell hasn't trolled meh yet, once he starts trolling, Aye will steal his minions…"

"Why don't you just wait until he's 80 years old before you steal them then? Even if he doesn't troll you in this game, what about the debt from the last few times?" Jian Rong went back to the base to buy items. "You probably won't meet this dumbass in queue anymore after you return to the higher tiers. Take advantage of right now to requite injury with injury and avenge all your grievances."

Savior hesitated for a second. "What does 'reh-kwait injury with injury' mean?"

Jian Rong said: "Basically, if he screwed you over once, then you have to screw him over once in return. Holding yourself back means you'll regret it for a lifetime. Understand?"

[You imparting life experience here???]

[I just checked, this ADC is 2 LP short of climbing to Grandmaster, no wonder he isn't trolling in this game.]

[Damn, how come you're also fucking corrupting people from other teams hahahaha]

[You said so many things, can Savior understand?]

Savior understood.

He contemplated deeply in the base for a minute. Once he left, he began stealing minions and kills, and no matter what kind of pings the ADC sent, it was useless.

After Jian Rong camped and killed the enemy jungler in the jungle, he switched cameras to the bot lane just in time to see Savior betraying their teammate.

Most likely because he had never done this sort of immoral thing before, Savior looked extremely clumsy while running away at full health.

In the end, the disadvantaged enemy team decided to go for Baron.

The actor ADC hovered around the area above the pit and placed a ward in it, wanting to keep an eye on the situation. The instant the ward was placed, the ADC also went down into the pit with a *bang*—Jian Rong, who was wandering aimlessly about next to him, burst the explosive fruit that was underneath the ADC's feet.

The actor ADC dropped into the pit and was beaten to death by the five opposing players.

Amidst the countless question mark pings from the ADC, Savior's Vel'Koz took down some of the enemy jungler's HP with his ult, forcing the jungler to use Smite to regain health. Jian Rong flipped over the wall and went down to steal Baron before he flashed over the same wall and escaped.

One mid laner and one support departed freely and carelessly, leaving behind only the ADC's "corpse" and a screen full of pings.

The minute before the game ended, Jian Rong said, "Type."

Savior: "What should Aye say?"

"You don't know how to insult someone?"

"Oh… yes."

[Savior: *youareadumbass!*]

Jian Rong began pondering, *How come I can read Korean*.

Two seconds later, Jian Rong questioned in front of a barrage full of laughter, "You freaking insulted a Korean person using *pinyin*???"

"Ah." Savior was also dumbfounded. "Aye forgot."

"…"

Lu Boyuan was woken up by XIU's incoming call.

Without bothering to open his eyes, he answered, "Speak."

XIU was very stirred up. “It’s already noon, big bro, you’re still not awake yet?!”

Lu Boyuan went silent for a moment. “Did you retire and come to our base to be a manager?”

XIU: “…Savior has been duo queueing with your team’s mid laner for two hours now.”

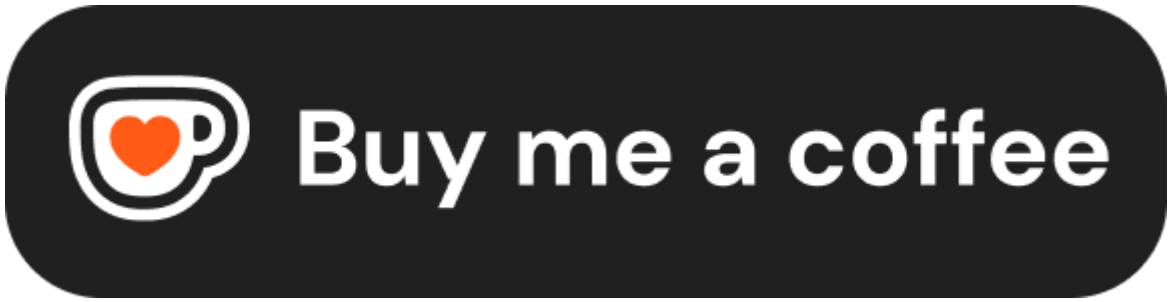
Lu Boyuan: “And?”

“I can’t get him to stop. He just learned how to dance on top of someone’s dead body, I think he’s going to learn how to AFK at the fountain and flame people next.” XIU sucked in a deep breath and said weakly, “I’m begging you, before Savior’s account is banned, hurry up and get out of bed so you can take your mid laner away.”

Lu Boyuan: “…”

Yan: Another quick reminder since it’s been a while since we’ve had extensive interaction with Savior – he mispronounces a lot of characters in Chinese (due to accent), so attempting to convey that the best I can in English ^ ^’ but you get the gist

Wei: Jian Rong really out here corrupting Savior LOL



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ICDI Chapter 90: #Soft's stream was arrested by Road#

Thanks to Anon for the Ko-fi!

This stream, which had everyone thinking *"is this even allowed*," concluded with Road entering the practice room, his team jacket draped around him, and taking Soft away.

That afternoon, the topic "#when will Soft play on the Korean server#" was replaced by "#Soft's stream was arrested by Road#"; the topic following closely underneath it was "#Savior assimilates into China e-sports#".

Oblivious bystanders clicked on the topics with the mindset of "*your e-sports circle is so full of bullshit, any damn incident can make it onto the hot search*." After they finished watching the video clips, they then started begging for this blue-haired teacher's streaming platform in the comment section.

Ding-*ge* had been in this industry for six years, but he had never encountered something as excessive as this before.

During their midnight snack, Ding-*ge* stood on the balcony, one hand on his hip as he held his phone and furiously laned against PUD's manager. His voice was so loud that even the second team next door could hear him—

"What do you mean, my mid laner led your mid laner astray? Yes, Soft was the one who brought it up first, but is Savior a three-year-old child? He has

his own opinions, he wanted to do that himself, understand!

“I’m twisting your words? To me, it looks like you’re forcefully shifting the blame! Such a big team can’t even protect its own members, just look at how awfully Savior was flamed on the Korean server and Ventbar, what are you doing as a manager? If Soft hadn’t helped him release his anger, I bet Savior would’ve become depressed on the spot!

“Thinking of it like that, you should be thanking me! When will you be sending over the tuition fee for Soft?!

“Oh right, let’s settle the hot search fee too—your team’s new mid laner hasn’t gotten on the hot search yet since joining the LPL, has he?

“I didn’t keep an eye on our team’s mid laner? Soft hasn’t publicly insulted anyone for two weeks now! Do you know how difficult that is to accomplish?! But then your mid laner approached him and immediately threw out five consecutive party invites, forcefully bringing that negative energy into our base! I’m telling you, if anything goes wrong with Soft’s performance in the upcoming matches, it’s all your mid laner’s freaking fault!!”

Everyone else was sitting on the couch. Xiao Bai wanted to laugh, but didn’t dare to. He grabbed Pine’s jacket and covered his face with it, choking back his laughter to the point that his shoulders were shaking.

Pine: “Don’t you dare wipe your snot onto it.”

Yuan Qian couldn’t take it any longer either. He cupped a hand over his mouth and whispered, “He won’t be insulting and insulting and then end up

challenging him to a fight, right?"

"Probably not." Xiao Bai said, "Jian Rong has argued with so many people before, yet you've never seen him actually challenge anyone to a fight in real life over it."

Jian Rong crunched down on his chips. "Don't bring me into this."

Lu Boyuan's phone kept vibrating and buzzing. XIU had been texting him nonstop.

[XIU: Savior was just lectured by our coach, this is actually his first time being scolded since he joined the team.]

[XIU: But he isn't sad at all, fuck, he's in an even better mood than he was the day he joined. He was even humming a Korean song a moment ago.]

[XIU: That song is fairly well known, I forget the name, have you ever seen My Girl? It's the theme song from that drama, I can do the rap from it.]

Lu Boyuan was afraid that XIU would end up sending a voice message over, so he quickly stopped him.

[R: Why are you telling me about your team's mid laner?]

[XIU: I just think that your mid laner is pretty amazing. With Savior's situation a few days ago, I was about to ask the coach to find a psychologist.]

[XIU: Is Soft going to be scolded too? He wasn't affected too badly, was he.]

Lu Boyuan glanced at the person next to him.

Jian Rong was in the middle of playing Fight the Landlord on his phone, with one of his legs propped up high over the other as he ate potato chips.

Jian Rong was the landlord. The other two peasants were frantically giving boosts to each other, pissing Jian Rong off so much that he directly threw down a king bomb. Ultimately, the two peasants worked together to get rid of all their cards, and the free Happy Beans that he could receive that day vanished in one game.

"Dammit…" Jian Rong swore lowly. Then, as if he had sensed something, he turned his head and looked over.

A second later, his eyebrows, which had been tightly knitted together due to those 2,000 Happy Beans, instantly unfurrowed.

The others were still eavesdropping on Ding-*ge*'s call.

Jian Rong subconsciously lowered his gaze and stared briefly at Lu Boyuan's lips. Although the injury wasn't obvious, it was still there.

Jian Rong cursed at himself in his mind before he shifted a tiny bit closer to Lu Boyuan and asked softly, "Does it hurt?"

It took Lu Boyuan a second to realize what Jian Rong was talking about.

It actually didn't hurt at all. If Ding-*ge* hadn't brought it up, he wouldn't have even noticed.

Lu Boyuan locked eyes with Jian Rong for a moment and said, "A little."

Jian Rong reached into his pocket and rummaged around, fishing out three tubes of ointment.

He stuffed the tubes into Lu Boyuan's hand. "Then put some of this on."

Lu Boyuan looked at the three differently packaged tubes, amused. "Which one?"

"They're all effective." Jian Rong contemplated before recommending, "How about you apply a different one every day?"

If Lu Boyuan did that, the injury would most likely recover completely before he could even have a chance to try them all.

Lu Boyuan laughed. "…sure."

Jian Rong unlocked his phone again and used his hard-earned money to buy 12 *yuan* worth of Happy Beans.

Lu Boyuan's head drooped forward lazily as he calmly watched Jian Rong play. They were sitting quite close to each other.

Jian Rong was fierce regardless of what game he was playing. With a rotten hand of cards, he seized the landlord position and even super-doubled the stake.

Lu Boyuan saw that he was taking a long time to play a card, so he said quietly, "First play the pair…"

Jian Rong: "I'll be more gentle in the future."

"…"

Lu Boyuan stared at the flushed tips of Jian Rong's ears. Some time passed before he finally said, "It doesn't matter."

He lowered his voice and said mildly, "I still have three tubes of ointment, do as you like."

Jian Rong was caught off guard, and he accidentally pressed the '*show cards*' button.

Two minutes later, the Happy Beans that he had just purchased for 12 *yuan* flew away with the wind.

The official penalty for Savior's trolling was swiftly handed down. He would be fined 1,000 USD, but wouldn't be banned from competing.

When Jian Rong learned of that, he had just finished a practice match.

"Damn, at least it was only a fine." Ding-*ge* let out a breath of relief.

Jian Rong unplugged his peripherals and was about to go back to play ranked when he suddenly felt like something wasn't quite right. He took out his phone and calculated the exchange rate before he questioned, "How come he was only fined a thousand USD, but when it comes to me, the starting fine is ten thousand RMB?"

"It's because he was reported on the Korean server, so it was settled according to Korea's rules… you still have the nerve to ask that?!" Ding-*ge* raged, "Tell me, why did you feel the need to carry out some live learning

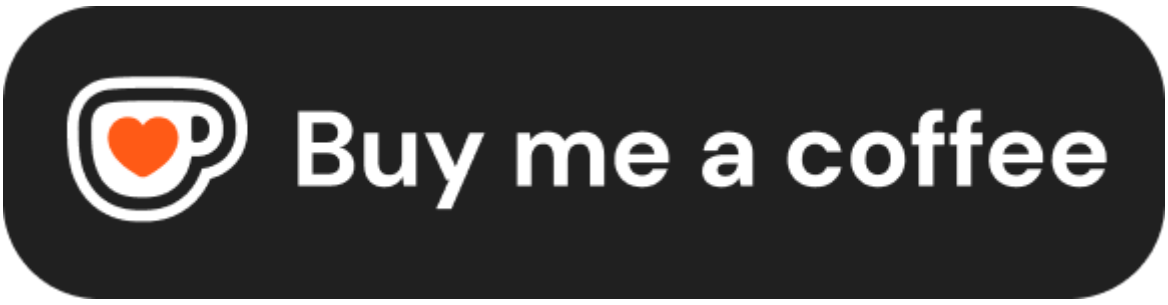
session for no reason? And you didn't teach him anything good either! Thankfully it was only a fine this time, if Savior was given a competition ban instead, then this incident would be spread as TTC's conspiracy! I wouldn't be able to clear things up even if I had ten freaking mouths!!!"

Jian Rong chewed on his gum. "Well, how was I supposed to know his acting skill was so trash?"

Ding-*ge*: "?"

"When I told him to betray his teammate, I meant for him to pretend to disconnect halfway through a team fight, or purposefully miss his attacks… he turned tail and ran at full health all on his own, what could I have done about that."

Ding-*ge* felt both mentally and physically exhausted. "Just shut your mouth. Although they aren't penalizing you this time, the upper management still verbally criticized you a bit. Don't bother streaming today, in case Savior's fans come to get their revenge and you guys end up fighting again."



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ICDI Chapter 91: The second ointment is more effective.

Thank you to kekeke for the Ko-fi~

The LPL's announcement of the penalty was published on LoL's official website and Weibo at eight PM that night.

The post was written in the same format as always, as if the only thing replaced was the pro player's name. Antis who were aware of the entire sequence of events were storing up their energy and waiting to act; they were already prepared to control the direction of the comment section and stir up conflict between TTC and PUD.

But when they opened the comment section—

[PUD fan here, we will happily pay this fee. My baby Savior is really super-duper cute, Mommy wishes you eternal happiness.]

[I've already replayed the stream from that day a hundred times now. I won't apologize for all the insults I gave Soft in the past, but this time, I am wholeheartedly saying thank you]

[No way no way, nowadays when a pro player publicly teaches someone to troll, nobody flames them for it anymore? This is an issue with the quality of his character, okay?]

[There's no need to mention quality of character when you're dealing with actor dogs. I'm willing to pay 10k to kill a troll.]

[Savior darling will resume streaming tomorrow, will I be able to see him duo Q with Soft again?]

[Wait a sec? What's going on? Only penalizing Savior but not my son? The LPL is looking down on him, huh? I'm telling you, Soft's penalty announcement must be arranged by tomorrow!]

[My son has been earning a lot of money lately. LPL, don't hold back on your punishment ah.]

[Stop talking stop talking, he hasn't streamed for two days now, and there hasn't been any activity on his Weibo either. It's a reasonable suspicion to think that TTC's coach has already secretly done away with him.]

[Savior is so well-behaved, I hope that PUD's coach can look after him well. Don't let him get close to my son again, my son isn't some good person.]

[Indeed. Before I watched the dumbass' streams, I was the #1 soft girl in Summoner's Rift, but now I can annihilate nine entire clans all on my own.]

The LPL was lacking mid laners recently. As a result, ever since these two mid laners belonging to the new generation settled in the LPL, the water friends and fans had fought ferociously with each other.

Yet today, the fans were in perfect harmony, full of joy, to the point that they even wanted to reach out and shake hands.

The antis struggled to incite arguments amidst it all, but they weren't able to create any waves whatsoever.

Savior forwarded the Weibo post. His apology was written in a very official manner, and it was clear that someone else had typed it out for him.

Just as the fans thought that things would conclude here, at one in the morning, Savior added another comment underneath his apology Weibo post—

[PUD-Savior: I have something else to say to everyone~ ^^ Soft is a mid laner I've met whose individual strength is extremely strong. I could sense it during the competitive match, his mechanics are amazing! I very much want to play with him again, he's the Chinese friend I like the most, besides my teammates and staff team. Fans, please don't attack him, I will be super sad QvQ after I resume streaming, I will do my best to play with him again~! Thank you everybody!]

Xiao Bai encountered this comment during a break between games, and he proceeded to dramatically read it aloud in the practice room.

Leaning back in his chair, Lu Boyuan was in the middle of watching a recording of PUD's last regular season match.

After Xiao Bai finished reading the entire comment, Lu Boyuan lifted his hand and expressionlessly hit the fast-forward button.

Pine raised an eyebrow. "Is he confessing?"

Yuan Qian rubbed his aching wrist, smiling dumbly with his head lowered as he scrolled through his girlfriend's messages. "My wife also sent me that comment, she told me to take some notes from Savior…"

"The comments underneath it are all things like '*totally shipping it*,' '*get engaged today, meet each other on the peak*,' '*TTC and PUD formally connected through marriage*'… tsk, it's because they didn't hear what Ding-*ge* sounded like a few days ago when he was laning against PUD's manager. What marriage alliance? A family feud, that's what this is." Xiao Bai muttered for a while before he turned his head and said, "Jian Rong, how come you don't have any reaction."

Jian Rong wasn't paying any attention to him. He was currently drilling last-hitting, and he asked without bothering to look over, "What?"

Xiao Bai said bluntly, "The PUD mid laner's confession to you."

"…"

Jian Rong picked up his phone and checked the comment.

The paragraph read like it had been machine translated, and it was clear from first glance that Savior had written it himself. There were also a ton of people mentioning him in the comments below; who knew what they were getting so excited over.

Two minutes later, Jian Rong locked his phone and placed it face down on the table.

Xiao Bai was startled. "Are you not going to respond?"

"I did."

Xiao Bai curiously refreshed his Weibo timeline. With a *thunk*, the post that Jian Rong had just forwarded appeared at the very top of his home page.

[TTC · Soft: Forwarding this Weibo // PUD-Savior: I have something else to say to everyone~ ^^ Soft is a mid laner I've met…]

Emotionless, indifferent, without even an emoticon.

Internally, Xiao Bai felt briefly sorry for Savior. Then he scrolled down and discovered that their mid laner had actually forwarded another Weibo post in those past few minutes.

[TTC · Soft: [cheer] [thumbs up] Beautiful, support. // TTC · Road: Thanks to Feng Hua Peripherals for creating these exclusive Road keycaps…]

Xiao Bai: "…"

Xiao Bai clicked on the post to confirm something.

That's right, Jian Rong had forwarded Lu Boyuan's sponsored post—and it was one that had been posted a whole freaking month ago.

Along with the netizens underneath that Weibo post, he felt even more sorry for Savior.

Jian Rong had missed quite a few minions today during their practice match earlier, so he kept practicing it throughout the night.

Once he finally hit his self-imposed goal, Jian Rong let out a long sigh. Then, pretending to act casual, he looked behind him just in time to see Lu Boyuan stand up from his chair, holding his phone.

Lu Boyuan stuck one hand in his pocket, and he sensed Jian Rong's gaze. "What's up."

Jian Rong said, "Nothing… wanted to duo queue with you."

Lu Boyuan glanced at the clock on the wall before he said, "I have to do something, maybe in a bit."

After Lu Boyuan left, Jian Rong slouched backwards and sprawled listlessly in his chair.

As the playoffs drew closer, more and more teams started scheduling practice matches with them; it was almost enough to fry their minds. When a practice match was finished, they had to review it, and when the review was finished, they had to continue practicing… he hadn't really talked to Lu Boyuan the entire day.

Jian Rong rubbed his face. He kind of wanted to eat scallion oil noodles again.

He shifted his mouse and created a lobby before he turned his head and asked, "Wanna duo queue?"

Xiao Bai asked in return, "Chinese or Korean server?"

Jian Rong said, "You're currently talking to the Korean server's future rank one player."

"No thanks then." Xiao Bai decisively chickened out. "I still want to be happily alive."

Jian Rong didn't force Xiao Bai. It didn't matter to him whether he did solo or duo queue. He just thought that he might as well practice his teamwork while he was climbing.

Right as he selected his roles and entered matchmaking, his phone abruptly vibrated.

[R: Come to the break room?]

From his peripheral vision, Xiao Bai saw Jian Rong playing on his phone expressionlessly, head lowered. All of a sudden, he felt like their mid laner was also a tiny bit pitiful—if it wasn't because Jian Rong had to go through too much hardship when he was young, who would want to become a little troll that nobody cherished or loved?

Being flamed by water friends, being trolled by actors, and now he couldn't even find someone to play games with him…

Xiao Bai's heart was filled with guilt and sympathy. A few seconds later, he mentally prepared himself to do some reverse climbing before he gritted his teeth and said, "Forget it, I can queue with you—"

Jian Rong shot to his feet, swiveled around, and started walking towards the door.

Xiao Bai was taken aback. "Where are you going? Didn't you want to duo queue? I've already logged in…"

"I'm busy, I can't carry you anymore." Jian Rong said, "Play by yourself."

Xiao Bai: "???"

It was late at night, and the lights in the base's living room were off.

The practice room was brightly lit, as if time didn't pass in it. Only when Jian Rong walked out of the room into darkness did he vaguely recall what time it was.

The aroma of coffee saturated the break room. Lu Boyuan leaned against the counter, one hand placed its edge while he looked down at his phone.

Hearing noise, Lu Boyuan lifted his head. "Come here."

Jian Rong had gamed all day in front of his computer, and he didn't even have to think to know just how bad he looked right now. He subconsciously ruffled his messy hair as he walked over to Lu Boyuan. "…did you need me for something?"

Lu Boyuan watched as Jian Rong's hair grew more and more disheveled. He said, amused, "If I don't, am I not allowed to seek you out?"

With a single sentence, the exhaustion from two hours of last-hitting practice seemed to fly away.

Jian Rong licked his lips and said, "You are."

"I saw that you were practicing the entire night, so I called you over to relax a little." Lu Boyuan set his phone down. "We still have a match tomorrow, how late are you planning to practice?"

Jian Rong said, "Just a few more games, and then I'll sleep."

Lu Boyuan hummed. He cast his eyes down and asked, “Do your fingers feel sore.”

Last-hitting was the most tedious of the fundamental drills; you had to continuously click on the mouse and auto-attack to finish off the minions and get their gold. It had to be repeated over and over in order to develop the muscle memory for it, and anyone who practiced it for a long period of time would feel uncomfortable.

Jian Rong was practicing early game last-hitting with a mage champion. He could only auto-attack, and he dealt less damage than a physical damage champion, which was why he drilled for two hours before he was finally satisfied.

Out of habit, Jian Rong wanted to put up a strong front and act like everything was fine.

Lu Boyuan then said, “I can help massage your hand?”

Jian Rong swallowed his “*it doesn’t feel sore*” back into his stomach. His right hand, which was hanging at his side, unconsciously twitched.

Lu Boyuan’s hands felt somewhat cool, or perhaps the temperature of Jian Rong’s palm was just high due to him practicing last-hitting for too long.

Lu Boyuan picked up his fingers one by one, slowly kneading all the way from the base to the tip. Whenever he drew his hand back, his fingertips would always scrape lightly against the sides of Jian Rong’s fingers.

Every time they brushed by, Jian Rong would swiftly blink once, tingles running down his back.

At first, Jian Rong stared obediently down at his hand. But not long after, taking advantage of the fact that Lu Boyuan's head was lowered and he couldn't see him, Jian Rong's gaze floated up all on its own.

He never thought much of them being in the practice room together every day for over ten hours, but the moment they were alone, all sorts of thoughts jumped out.

"Does it feel good." Lu Boyuan's head was still lowered.

Whether it felt good or not was the least of Jian Rong's concerns. His throat bobbed, and he responded indistinctly, "Mn."

Lu Boyuan said, "I'm just messing around."

"..."

Lu Boyuan stopped his movements and suddenly said, "The second ointment is more effective.

"The cut is already healed."

Jian Rong shut his eyes briefly as his ears flushed red because of those two lines.

He couldn't resist hooking his index finger around Lu Boyuan's fingers, wanting to hold his hand. At the same time, Lu Boyuan tilted his head, bent down, and kissed him.

…

For the sake of his old back, Xiao Bai decided to return to his room to rest.

Right as he walked out of the practice room, he saw that the door to the first floor break room was half open, and the lights were on inside.

As a result, he braced both hands against the railing and shouted downstairs, “Who’s in the break room—”

Nobody answered.

“Anyone there?” Xiao Bai continued to yell, “*Dididi~*”

Someone jerked open the door with quite a bit of force, and it even let out a muffled *bang* as it slammed against the wall.

Jian Rong silently came out from inside. He raised his head and looked straight at Xiao Bai.

Xiao Bai: “…”

Perhaps it was because the lights in the living room were off, but at that instant, he felt as if the expression in Jian Rong’s eyes was somewhat sinister. It was extremely terrifying.

Xiao Bai swallowed for no particular reason. “Can… you bring a cup of milk up for me while you’re down there…”

Jian Rong glared at him for a few seconds before he coldly spat out, “You just wait.”

Xiao Bai: "……"

—

None of the next few teams TTC played against were particularly strong. Their accumulated points were so low that even if they were to unexpectedly beat TTC, they still wouldn't be able to enter the playoffs, so the teams were all in somewhat dispirited moods. This allowed TTC to effortlessly win their last two spring season matches.

After WZWZ and Fighting Tiger finished their last matches, the regular season portion of this year's Spring Split officially concluded.

PUD was ranked first with all wins and no losses. TTC was ranked second with fourteen victories and one defeat.

The playoffs were set up according to a seeded single elimination bracket. The top two teams entered the semifinals by default, meaning TTC had ample time to prepare for the playoffs.

"Our next match is ten days from now, so we still have some time, since the other teams have to compete for their spots. We don't know which team we're playing against yet in the semifinals, but none of the teams who can qualify for the playoffs are weak." After they finished watching the match, Ding-*ge* turned off the broadcast. "Let's practice hard in these upcoming days, don't leave behind any regrets."

Xiao Bai bit down on his popsicle. "Of course. I'm still thinking about that car from Fu-*ge*."

Ding-*ge* nodded before he suddenly recalled something. “Oh right. Same old thing as usual tomorrow, I’ve already arranged the transportation. Sleep earlier tonight.”

Were they going out for a practice match?

Jian Rong encountered two actors in this game, so he had to put even more effort into his gameplay and didn’t get to ask Ding-*ge* about it before he left the base. After that, Jian Rong forgot about the matter completely.

So the next day, Jian Rong was a little stupefied when he was woken up by a call at seven in the morning.

He washed up and changed into his team uniform before he headed downstairs with his peripherals bag on his back. Then, standing on the staircase, he exchanged looks for a while with his other teammates, who were wearing casual clothes, hats, and masks.

Xiao Bai looked him up and down several times. “Whatcha doing?”

Jian Rong was bewildered. “Getting ready for a practice match.”

Ding-*ge*: “What practice match?”

“Didn’t you arrange the transportation… to go out for a practice match?”

Everyone was sleepy this early in the morning, but when they heard that question, they woke themselves up quite a bit from laughing.

“My bad. I forgot to tell you…” Lu Boyuan held back his laughter. “It’s a tradition that Fu-*ge* set. Before the playoffs, we have to pick a day to go

burn incense."

Jian Rong: "…"

In the car on the way to the temple, Xiao Bai was still laughing.

With a scowl, Jian Rong asked, "What the hell are you laughing about."

"No, just… why didn't you ask anyone if you didn't know?" Xiao Bai's cackling increased. "And you came down with your keyboard too…"

Jian Rong: "Too lazy to ask."

Who would've freaking expected the LPL's number one rich powerhouse to also believe in feudalistic superstitions.

Ding-*ge* booked the entry tickets a long time ago. After retrieving the tickets, they entered the temple.

Jian Rong had played ranked until three AM last night, so he got less than four hours of sleep in the middle. At that current moment, '*don't mess with me*' was written across his entire face.

Smoke spiraled through the temple. Jian Rong walked at the very back of the crowd, shoulder to shoulder with Lu Boyuan; both of them seemed extremely disinterested.

Especially Jian Rong. He stuck both hands in his pockets, his face filled with fatigue as he silently followed after the team.

There was a large incense burner in the middle of the temple, the top of which was already inserted full of incense sticks. Ding-*ge* tore open the package of incense that he had just purchased and distributed a handful to each person. “Come come come, everyone pray a little.”

Jian Rong glanced at the incense in his hand and refused. “You guys go ahead.”

“*Aiya*, you’re here anyway.” Ding-*ge* stuffed the incense into Jian Rong’s grasp. “It’s better to be safe than sorry. Pray a bit, make some random wish, it’s not like anything bad will happen.”

Jian Rong crinkled his brows. “I don’t know what to wish for.”

“Isn’t that easy?” Ding-*ge* said without thinking, “Just pray that we’ll have the advantage and that we’ll get the Ocean and Infernal Drakes every single game. Our opponents will shoot their ults in the wrong direction and miss, their carries will sleepwalk, right before the match they’ll get diarrhea and they can only send up their substitutes…”

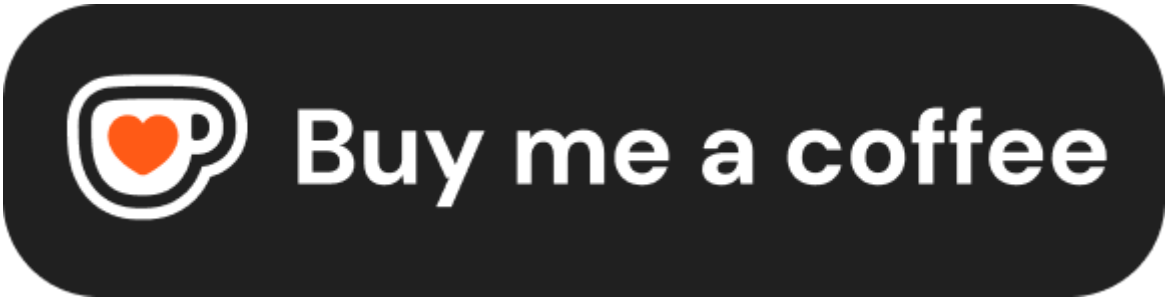
“Fuck!” A furious shout interrupted Ding-*ge*.

Jian Rong and Ding-*ge* jolted simultaneously. When they looked back, they stared straight into few familiar faces.

PUD’s five members were standing right behind them, looking uniformly awkward.

“I just knew that you were full of malicious schemes! You’ve been caught red-handed by me this time, hah?!” PUD’s manager peered around him

before he grabbed a bundle of incense from XIU. He lifted it into the air and said, “Reflect back onto you!!!”



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Ding-*ge* didn't expect to be caught by the very people he was trash-talking, which was a rare occasion in and of itself.

He cleared his throat. "I wasn't being serious—"

"Come on, as if I don't know you?" PUD's manager had lost their last battle over the phone, so he definitely wasn't going to let this one go now that he had the upper hand. "It's one thing for you to curse us into missing our ults and sleepwalking, yet you're also cursing us into getting diarrhea! You're such a malicious person! Cruel and merciless!!!"

Jian Rong lowered his head and made to take the incense that Ding-*ge* was handing over, but when he reached out, he grasped nothing but air.

Ding-*ge* also gripped the incense and counterattacked. "Yes, I'm malicious, but it's not like you're any better?"

PUD's manager: "What about me?! You're going to make false accusations again, huh!"

"Then you tell me, why exactly are you here? To beg for rain?" Ding-*ge* hit the nail on the head. "I refuse to believe that you didn't curse a defeat onto us!"

The PUD manager, who had just taught Savior in the car to wish for "*Soft getting banned from competing for flaming someone before the match*," felt his face redden. "—of course I didn't!"

Ding-*ge* sneered. “Not having the guts to own up to your actions, what kind of middle-aged man are you.”

PUD’s manager pushed up his glasses. “You should take a look at yourself first. A mature middle-aged man wouldn’t teach a child to curse other people.”

Jian Rong listened to them, speechless. The disdain in his eyes was extremely obvious.

What kind of childish insult war was this? If these two people were tossed into his stream, they would have a layer of their skin peeled off of them in less than two minutes by those flamers.

However, miraculously, the grumpiness that he had suppressed the entire trip over seemed to have largely dissipated.

He was about to take a step back to create some distance between him and those two primary school brats when someone wrapped a hand around his wrist.

As usual, Lu Boyuan’s eyes had turned into monolids in the morning. When he looked down, it made him seem somewhat cold and detached.

He split his own incense into two halves and placed one bundle into Jian Rong’s hand. “Let’s pay our respects first. We still have to visit a few other halls.”

It was bright and early in the morning, so all the visitors couldn’t help but glance in their direction.

Two middle-aged men, one with his hands planted on his waist, the other with his arms crossed, bickered back and forth for quite a while. Several young men stood behind each of the older men; they were all wearing hats and considerably expensive athletic shoes, their faces filled with exhaustion.

The other TTC members observed with a 'watching the show' attitude, and they even wanted to bet on who would win the argument. Meanwhile, the people in PUD who could understand the fight were still in a dilemma, while the ones who couldn't looked completely lost.

"Enough, everyone is watching." XIU paused before he joked, "Also, did you not see that their mid laner is also here? Look at Soft, he's ready to take over for his coach at any moment… can you out-flame him?"

PUD's manager swept a glance at Soft.

Soft was currently standing next to Road, head lowered as he took the incense from Road's hand. Then he turned around and went to burn the incense at the censer with Road.

He didn't seem to be particularly interested in taking over for his coach.

PUD's manager scoffed coldly before he turned back and returned the incense to XIU. "Go pray. If we finish soon, you guys can sleep for a little longer when we get back to the base."

Jian Rong still hadn't thought of a wish. He didn't even do this sort of thing when he blew out the candles on his birthday.

Eyes half-closed, he copied Lu Boyuan and bowed a few times without wishing for anything. He stepped forward and stuck the incense into the censer.

XIU's voice floated over from the side. "All you have to do is bow the way Soft just did."

Looking over, Jian Rong saw PUD standing next to them, seeming similarly unenergetic.

Jian Rong could faintly hear PUD's Korean coach talking to 98k—they were actually communicating in Chinese too.

XIU jerked his chin up in TTC's direction. "Why are you guys also here so early?"

Lu Boyuan brushed off the ashes stuck to his fingers. "Tradition."

During the first few years, when they were just starting out, Fu-*ge* used to personally bring them here himself. All business people seemed to believe in this stuff, and supposedly, the earlier you visited, the more sincere your intentions were. They had actually come comparatively late this year.

Yuan Qian inserted his incense and returned, asking, "Is this your first time coming here?"

"We came here last year too." XIU yawned. "But before we would always visit relatively late, which is probably why we never ran into you all."

Even though the two managers got into an argument the moment they saw each other, after lighting the incense, they still ended up walking together with sour looks on their faces as they discussed the follow-up from that stream mishap.

The other team members followed behind them without interacting much with each other. The two teams weren't all that close in the first place; usually only Lu Boyuan and XIU would contact one another.

Someone sidled up to Jian Rong.

"Soft." Savior called his name. "Are you playing on the Korean server this afternoon?"

Lu Boyuan shot a look over from the corner of his eye and gave him a lazy once-over before he swiftly withdrew his gaze again.

Jian Rong said, "Yes."

Savior's eyes lit up. "Then Aye wait for you?"

"Why would you wait for me?" Jian Rong was perplexed. "It's not like I'm going to play with you."

Everyone else: "……"

So cruel.

But Savior didn't seem too sad. He pulled out his phone. "Then you should add meh on WeChat, you can come find meh when you want to play."

This time, Jian Rong didn't reject him.

After adding each other on WeChat, Savior asked without thinking much of it, "The kitty in your profile picture, cute, is it yours?"

This was Jian Rong's first time hearing someone say Little Orange was cute.

He paused mid-chew on his candy as his expression visibly brightened quite a bit. "My son."

"This fat cat is your son?" Xiao Bai was so sleepy that he couldn't keep his eyes open, and he was slumped completely against Pine. He remembered something and subconsciously mumbled, "Your profile picture is your son, my *ge*'s profile picture is his daughter-in-law, you guys have matching couple profile pictures?"

Jian Rong crushed the candy in his mouth as his shoulders abruptly tensed.

Jian Rong definitely didn't care if other people knew about his relationship with Lu Boyuan.

Sometimes, he even wanted to pick up a huge megaphone and direct it straight at Xiao Bai, who somehow managed to mysteriously appear near them every single time, so that he could tell him to practice properly and stop roaming around the base all freaking day.

But his rationality told him that Lu Boyuan would most likely care.

Lu Boyuan had more endorsements than any other pro player ever in LPL history. Xiao Bai had listed them out for him before, and though Jian Rong

had never heard of a lot of them, it was still, as Xiao Bai had put it, plentiful and impressive.

This wasn't just due to Lu Boyuan being a strong player. It was also because he was handsome and had a lot of fans—especially those wife fans. Every time, they bought so much of Lu Boyuan's merch that it sold more than that of some idols.

That was one reason. Another reason was that they were both male.

Which made the issue even more complicated.

Jian Rong's face turned dark enough to rival the bottom of a pot. He grinded down on the fragments of candy again and started to say "*no*."

Lu Boyuan said lightly, "Mn."

Jian Rong nearly bit his tongue.

His shoulders went rigid as his heartbeat accelerated. All of his drowsiness instantaneously vanished.

"I knew it." Xiao Bai retracted his gaze. "P-baby and I also have matching pictures. His is a moon, mine are the stars."

Pine said evenly, "You're the one who changed it."

"Fuck." XIU laughed as he ended the topic of conversation. "What the hell is up with all you TTC people."

The subject effortlessly flew past, leaving Jian Rong as the only person who was still in a daze as he sucked on his candy.

That was it?

They were done talking about it now?

Ding-*ge* and PUD's manager walked out from the shrine. "This hall is small, there are only two spots. Let's enter in batches, Jian Rong, you go first."

PUD's manager reached out and tugged at Savior. "You go too, you can just copy Soft."

Before Jian Rong could snap out of it, someone took off his hat.

Lu Boyuan lifted his hand and smoothed down the two tufts of hair that were sticking up on Jian Rong's head. "Go ahead."

The two teams' mid laners went in together. There was a lot of smoke in the shrine, so Lu Boyuan wanted to place Jian Rong's hat inside his jacket to block it, but he ended up grabbing nothing but air. Only then did he recall that he wasn't wearing a jacket.

A pat landed on his shoulder. XIU was standing behind him, and he twitched his lips to the side.

They walked over to a nearby tree.

XIU got straight to the point and asked, "You're together now?"

Lu Boyuan replied simply, "Mn."

“…you’re really something.” XIU began counting the days in his head before he realized that he didn’t even need to—they had just finished the regular season.

“Though I told you to chase him before, didn’t you act a little too fast?” XIU thought of something. “Is Soft eighteen yet?”

“Just turned.”

“Incredible.”

Pedestrians would occasionally pass by them, and their teammates were all standing in front of them too, so it wasn’t convenient to say too much.

XIU glanced at the little bluenette, who was bowing somewhat half-heartedly in the shrine, and suddenly grew curious. “What do you like about him?

“His youth? His great gaming skills? His sharp tongue? His good looks?” XIU became more and more enthusiastic with each question. “Did you always like guys? Fuck… then back when us bros played around in the internet cafes together…”

Lu Boyuan: “Stop there, it has nothing to do with any of you.”

XIU remembered how Lu Boyuan used to have to pad his ears with napkins if he used one of their headphones in the past, and XIU silently pulled back his diverging train of thought.

He circled back to his previous topic. “Then what exactly do you like about the little blunette?”

Actually, Lu Boyuan wasn’t planning on answering that question.

But when Jian Rong exited the shrine and poked his head out, peering around in an attempt to find someone, Lu Boyuan said without thinking, “Cute.”

XIU: “?”

What the hell?

XIU couldn’t help but look behind him, squarely meeting Jian Rong’s eyes.

Once Jian Rong discovered that he was standing next to Lu Boyuan, his eyelids slowly lowered, causing his gaze to become extremely unfriendly.

XIU: “…”

If you said that word in front of Soft’s dad fans, they’d think that you were humiliating their son.

The two teams paid their respects in all the shrines. Finally, the only thing left was the statue of Buddha.

Everyone let out an obvious sigh of relief. XIU raised his arms into the air and stretched. “Let’s hurry up. After we get back, I can still sleep for another two hours…”

As XIU spoke, Jian Rong looked in his direction before pausing.

The weather had been nice lately in Shanghai, so they were almost all wearing short-sleeves. XIU alone wore a thin, long-sleeved shirt. When his arms were naturally lowered, nothing was visible, but when he extended them, several overlapping pain relief patches were revealed, stuck to his wrists.

Jian Rong stared at him, a little out of it. He only silently averted his gaze once Ding-*ge* hastened him along.

Lu Boyuan casually kowtowed twice, but as he got up, he discovered that the person next to him was still kneeling on the ground.

He tilted his head and glanced over, lifting a brow.

Jian Rong, who had just been giving a few perfunctory bows this entire time before getting up and leaving, currently had his eyes closed and hands pressed together. He stayed in that position for a few seconds before he bent forward and kowtowed.

The trip back was much livelier than the one there. Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian chattered about how their noses were filled with the scent of smoke, while Pine played Fight the Landlord with the sound on. The theme song from last year's Worlds was also playing in the car.

Jian Rong no longer felt sleepy at all. He leaned back in the seat as he looked outside the window, as if there was something occupying his mind.

His phone vibrated. Jian Rong absent-mindedly checked it—

[R: What did you wish for just now?]

Jian Rong reacted very quickly.

They were riding in a minivan today, which meant the space was limited. No matter how quietly they spoke, the people sitting in front of them would be able to hear.

[R-ong: If I say it out loud, it won't come true.]

[R: You can tell your boyfriend, Buddha will understand.]

Boy…

Jian Rong's brain instantly overheated, and he whipped his head around.

Lu Boyuan's head was lowered. There wasn't any particular expression on his face, and someone who didn't know better would think that he was watching a competition video.

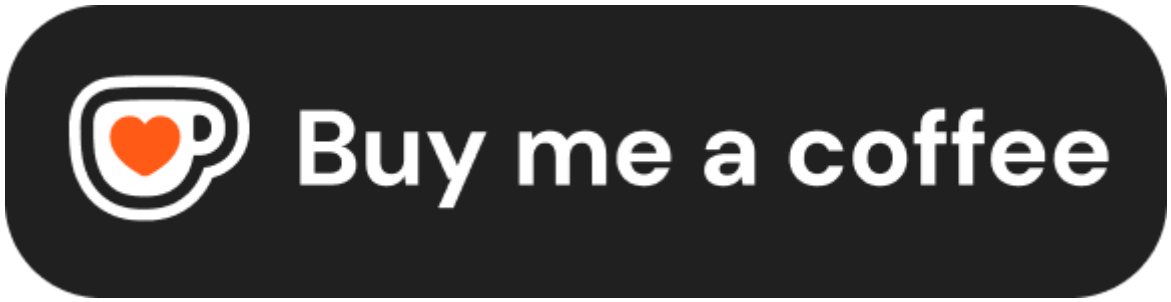
Jian Rong rigidly withdrew his gaze. He ducked his head and stared at his phone as he vigorously ruffled his hair a few times, before he then reached out and pinched the brim of his hat.

Why were there so many small movements.

Lu Boyuan felt amused. Seeing Jian Rong's internal struggle, Lu Boyuan didn't keep pressing the issue, and he typed out: *It's fine if you don't want to say it…*

[R-ong: I made one wish.]

[R-ong: I hope that my boyfriend's hand is okay.]



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Thank you to Ko-fi Supporter for the Ko-fi~

The LPL's two big powerhouse teams went to pray for blessings at the temple together.

That piece of news quickly spread online, and the pictures that a passerby took, which revealed the incident, were all posted on Weibo as well.

Because the pictures were secretly taken, they were fairly blurry, and barely any of them captured the team members' faces fully.

When the news broke, the water friends and fans were all somewhat confused.

The fans of these two teams had been hammering each other for so many years now. It had already reached the point where if one side lost, the other side would set off firecrackers and give out red envelopes on Tieba to celebrate… so how come they kept appearing together on esports news lately?

The water friends who were curious, along with the ones who hoped that all the LPL teams could be friendly with each other and stand united against foreign teams, immediately rushed over to Soft's stream, as he was currently live—

"We did go to burn incense." The little bluenette chewed on his gum as he looked down at the minimap, his tone of voice as condescending as ever.

“What… with PUD? We’re not very close.”

[I thought that you didn’t believe in this kind of thing? You don’t even burn incense on New Year’s Day, instead you streamed for 15 days straight during the past two New Year holidays. Yet you actually went to the temple today?!]

[You’re not close and you still go visit the temple with them? What, there’s a ticket discount for large groups, is that it.]

[Savior cues you all the time in his stream, but now you’re saying that you two aren’t close. Where’s your conscience?]

[Carrying away Savior, the penalty announcement has come out and the incident is over now. Let’s unbind our two teams, if you or your fans don’t mind, please don’t mention Savior again.]

[Who the hell bound themselves to you all? Even if my son is actually gay, it’s not like he’d be with Savior. Isn’t it more appealing to date Road?]

[Arguing again, the love and hate between esports fans and CP fans truly occur within a split second~]

[……dumbass, why are you smiling?]

In the video, the person who had remained mostly expressionless the entire time popped his bubble of gum. It wasn’t clear which comment he had read; he pressed his lips together, trying to hold back, but in the end the corners of his mouth still curved upward as he smiled.

When Jian Rong first began streaming, he very rarely smiled, except for a twitch of his lips upon getting a pentakill. Back then, the old water friends all called him 'Scowling King,' and some people even joked that their real day-to-day lives were going way too smoothly, which was why they specially came to Jian Rong's stream to seek out some unhappiness.

Later on, as he gained more water friends and started making money, allowing him to get by a little easier, Jian Rong's smiles gradually increased —however, they were all the extremely mocking sort of smile, frequently accompanied by a breezy "*that's it?*".

A smile radiating with contentment like this one…

[This is the 7th time. In the hour he's been streaming so far, this dumbass has foolishly smiled seven times for no particular reason.]

[It's like he won the lottery, the type that's in the millions.]

[That's not it. I'm rationally suspecting that he flew to Korea and beat up that hater who flamed him a few days ago.]

[It's not that complicated, it's probably just because something went wrong with his head.]

[…ah? Am I the only one who feels like he started dating someone? Also, he's not just smiling. Every time he recalls to base, he has to check his phone too, as if he's chatting with his girlfriend.]

[As a rotten man who picked a female accompanying gamer and then told her to be quiet and play the game in silence, he doesn't deserve to have a

girlfriend, hah.]

[Perhaps a boyfriend?]

It was true that Jian Rong kept checking his phone, but he wasn't chatting.

The moment the barrage brought it up, he couldn't help but lower his head, unlock his phone, and look again.

His conversation history with Lu Boyuan was on the screen.

"I hope that my boyfriend's hand is okay."[1]

The sentence had come out quite naturally at the time, but after he returned to the base and sobered up, he kept thinking that something felt off about it for some reason the more he looked at it—all the way up until he was two minutes late for streaming. When he entered his livestream room, he saw the water friends spamming *"I hope that he's okay"*[2] across the entire screen.

Jian Rong saw the light.

Dammit.

If he hadn't held ten sticks of incense in front of his nose to fumigate his brain, there was no way he could've written such a thing.

At that moment, all of his attention had been focused on the word "*boyfriend*."

Even though they had already kissed, neither of them had actually clearly established what kind of relationship existed between them. So the moment Lu Boyuan tossed out that word… his mind went blank.

Jian Rong remembered Lu Boyuan's laugh after he read that message, and Jian Rong's mouth swiftly flattened into a straight line again.

"We didn't schedule it in advance, we ran into PUD at the temple." Jian Rong changed the topic. "Even though we went so early, we were still photographed… how did they recognize us?"

[Oh, the OP said that they saw a little shortie with dyed blue hair burning incense and recognized you immediately.]

Jian Rong's Zed oneshotted the enemy mid laner in less than two seconds. Then he switched windows and blocked that commenter.

Now that it was the playoffs, they had more and more practice matches lined up. Jian Rong streamed for two hours after getting back to the base before he holed up in the practice match room with his teammates, only emerging at midnight.

When they came out, there was a young woman with curled maroon hair sitting with one leg crossed over the other on the living room sofa, wearing a black suspender dress. Even in the middle of the night, she was still perfectly put together, down to the strands of her hair.

It was Yuan Qian's girlfriend, Youyou.

Hearing noise, Youyou looked up from her phone and smiled charmingly at them. Her eyes landed solely on her chubby boyfriend. “Done gaming? You’ve all worked hard. I brought a midnight snack for everyone.”

The moment Jian Rong neared the sofa, he caught a scent of the fragrant perfume she was wearing.

“I bought barbeque, stir-fried noodles, and sweet potato noodles.” Youyou pushed one of the black plastic bags towards Jian Rong. “Here, your black bean noodles.”

Yuan Qian wasn’t lying; Youyou was indeed a fan of Jian Rong’s stream. She knew that Jian Rong liked to eat black bean noodles when streaming, so every time she brought midnight snacks over, she would purposefully bring Jian Rong a serving.

At first, Jian Rong felt a little awkward, but over time he grew used to it.

He accepted the bag. “Thank you.”

Youyou slumped completely against Yuan Qian. Yuan Qian was on the plumper side, so it felt very safe to lean against him, and she propped her chin up on Yuan Qian’s shoulder. “I learned how to make soup recently. Should I make some tomorrow and send it over for you?”

“Okay.” Yuan Qian said, “I won’t eat anything else tomorrow, I’ll only drink soup.”

Xiao Bai asked, “Will there be any for us, sister-in-law?”

“Yup.” Youyou gestured in the air with her slender arm. “I’ll make it for you guys in a pot *thiiiiis* big.”

Xiao Bai instantly buttered up to her. “As expected, my sister-in-law is the best. With a few more sisters-in-law, I could gain twelve kilograms in one year.”

Yuan Qian: “Don’t worry, it’ll happen soon. Maybe Pine will bring a sister-in-law back for you tomorrow.”

Xiao Bai shook his head. “Not a chance. With his poker face, I bet he’ll still be an old single virgin by the time he’s thirty.”

Youyou said, “You could just find a girlfriend yourself, problem solved.”

Pine raised his eyes.

Xiao Bai shook his head even more vigorously. “No can do, if I start dating, what’ll I do if my wife fans run away?”

Ding-*ge*: “You don’t have any.”

Xiao Bai honestly corrected himself. “Then what’ll happen to me and Pine’s CP fans?

“And Jian Rong is too young, it’s too early for him to date.” Xiao Bai swept his gaze across everyone before finally landing on the man who was drinking sweet potato noodle soup, head lowered. “In the end, I still have to count on my *ge*.”

Jian Rong: “…”

Lu Boyuan lifted his head. “Don’t count on me, I don’t have a sister-in-law for you.”

“You shouldn’t say that so decisively, what if?” Xiao Bai continued carelessly, “What if you fall for someone one day…”

“There are no what ifs.” Ding-*ge* glanced at Jian Rong and unconsciously cut off Xiao Bai.

“Stop thinking about it, it seems to me that Captain is planning on looking for a partner after he retires.” As Yuan Qian ate his girlfriend’s love-filled midnight snack, he said indistinctly, “Besides, Captain comes from such a well-off family, they’re definitely going to find someone who’s an appropriate match for him.”

An appropriate match.

Jian Rong paused while chewing, one cheek bulging with food.

“That’s true.” Xiao Bai said, “You can tell from first glance that his dad is someone with really high standards.”

Yuan Qian: “Speaking of which… I know a classmate who’s super rich and was constantly going on matchmaking dates. His partners were all young ladies from these wealthy families, and his wedding was extremely extravagant.”

Xiao Bai recalled something. “Hm? *Ge*, I remember that Auntie also introduced a girl to you before, didn’t she?”

They were in the practice room at the time. When Lu Boyuan was replying to texts, he had accidentally clicked on a voice message, causing his mom's "*meet up with the young lady if you have a chance*" to float out. Everyone in the team had heard it.

Lu Boyuan said succinctly, "I refused."

"She's definitely going to introduce more girls to you." Yuan Qian said without thinking much of it, "Considering how much Uncle hates the fact that you game professionally… he probably won't approve of you dating someone in this circle."

"Enough, let's not talk about this nonsense." Ding-*ge* interrupted, "Finish eating quickly and go to bed, it's already so late…"

Lu Boyuan shot a look from the corner of his eyes. The person sitting next to him had already put down his chopsticks.

They had to get up too early today, which was then followed by an entire day of practice matches. Once the midnight snack was finished, Ding-*ge* waved his hands and told them not to stay up late practicing and to go to sleep earlier.

As Jian Rong was showering back in his room, Yuan Qian and Xiao Bai's conversation kept drifting through his mind. Then he started recalling his memories of Lu Boyuan's home.

Although he wasn't very clear on what Lu Boyuan's family circumstances were, to own a little villa like his family's in that particular district of Shanghai…

He vaguely remembered that there were many medals and certificates on display in the mahogany bookcase in the first floor living room.

Lost in thought, Jian Rong even forgot to put on his slippers when he left the bathroom.

Right as he was about to double back and get them, his phone suddenly chimed.

[R: Asleep?]

[R-ong: Not yet…]

[R: Open the door]

Jian Rong stood there blankly for two seconds before he promptly turned around to open the door.

Lu Boyuan had also just finished showering, and his towel was slung casually over his shoulder. At the sound of the door, he looked up from his phone and cast a glance into Jian Rong's room. "Am I allowed in?"

The first thing Lu Boyuan did upon entering the room was to grab the towel on his shoulder and cover Jian Rong's head with it.

His hands pressed down over the towel as he rubbed away, not too lightly or heavily. "How come you didn't dry your hair."

Jian Rong: "…I remembered that my towel is still drying on the balcony only after I finished showering."

The room went quiet for a while, save for the noises created by the towel rubbing against Jian Rong's hair.

Lu Boyuan dried off the water dripping from the ends of his hair before he said, "What they were talking about today…"

Jian Rong: "I'll work hard to make money."

Lu Boyuan was startled.

Jian Rong rubbed his nose. "Becoming an appropriate match probably isn't possible, but I'll do my best to earn some more money, so that… your dad won't be so angry."

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow slightly and didn't move as he looked down at Jian Rong.

When Lu Boyuan didn't say anything, Jian Rong swiftly blinked a few times before he asked belatedly, "For me to say this now, is it… too soon."

Lu Boyuan said, "A bit."

Jian Rong: "…"

But Lu Boyuan had come over with the intention of talking to him about this as well.

Upon noticing that Jian Rong hadn't really touched his midnight snack, Lu Boyuan was worried that his boyfriend was overthinking things, so he had wanted to tell him: he would take care of his own family matters. He wouldn't let Jian Rong feel troubled or be wronged.

Since Jian Rong just got out of the shower, he was wearing an extremely loose jersey as sleepwear, which revealed his delicate and slim collarbones.

Lu Boyuan continued to dry his hair for him, his movements sluggish. “How do you plan on working hard to make money?”

Jian Rong truly had seriously considered the issue before. “I’ll perform well in matches and see if there are any blinded business owners who’ll endorse me; I won’t insult anyone or cause trouble and I’ll try hard not to be penalized; I’ll spend a little less in everyday life and I won’t buy useless things; I’ll stream a lot and swindle gift money out of the water friends. After I retire, I’ll open a Taobao shop, but if it doesn’t go well I can also become a booster…”

Jian Rong didn’t get to finish.

Lu Boyuan used the towel to push up all of Jian Rong’s bangs. Then, he lowered his head and kissed him.

Jian Rong stiffened for a second, but he snapped out of it quickly enough and lifted his chin very slightly.

In regards to kissing, neither of them were actually very proficient at it.

The first time, they only knew to rub their lips against each other… and one person even got injured. Last time in the break room, their lips brushed once before they were interrupted by Xiao Bai.

Jian Rong stood bolt upright, a little afraid to mess around in case he bit down on Lu Boyuan’s lip again.

When Lu Boyuan coaxed his mouth open, Jian Rong froze completely.

Lu Boyuan kissed him a bit roughly this time, and Jian Rong's back somehow ended up pressed against the wall. With the towel padding the back of his head, he didn't feel any pain.

Just tingly.

His brain was tingling, his back was tingling… his tongue was also tingling.

Just as Jian Rong felt like he was about to run out of air, a phone ringtone suddenly sounded.

From Lu Boyuan's pocket.

Lu Boyuan answered the call as he wiped the corners of Jian Rong's mouth with his free hand. "What is it."

His voice was somewhat low and husky. Because of the interruption, he sounded quite unenthusiastic. "How come you're still at the base… you want to talk about it right now?"

Ding-*ge* walked upstairs, holding his phone. "I'm busy tomorrow and I can't come over to the base, so let's settle your birthday merch now, that way I can hand it off earlier. There's only a few mock-ups, all you have to do is look them over. You can open the door, I'm outside your room…"

Along with a "*got it*," the door opened with a creak.

However, it wasn't the door right in front of him.

Ding-*ge* was taken aback for a few seconds before he slowly and mechanically turned his head.

He saw their jungler hang up the phone and come out from their mid laner's room. The jungler's towel was still draped over the mid laner's head, both of their lips were a bit red, and even the mid laner's neck, ears, and the corners of his eyes were all fucking red. If he were to really go into detail, the clothing at the mid laner's waist was also a little wrinkled…

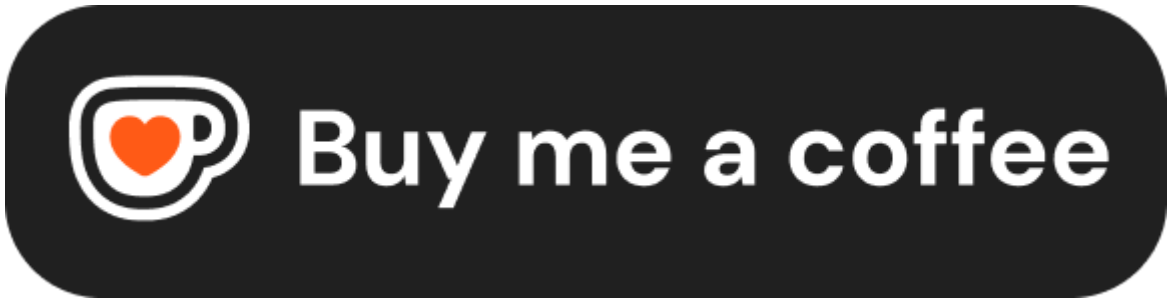
Ding-*ge*: "……"

What—the fuck.

Translation Notes

1. *Updated this line in the last chapter to fit more with the context of this chapter* ^
2. *The memes strike again… basically Jian Rong accidentally wrote his text in the same format as this meme (I hope that so-and-so is okay). But people use this meme ironically so the meaning is often flipped (I hope they're not doing okay)* ^

Yan: I vividly remember… it was in this chapter that I knew something was up with Xiao Bai and Pine for sure LOL



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ICDI Chapter 94: I'm saving it so the person I like can spend it.

Thanks to Ko-fi Supporter for the Ko-fi!

Ding-*ge* stayed frozen with his head swiveled around and went into self-seclusion on the spot.

After Lu Boyuan revealed to him that he was dating last time, Ding-*ge* hadn't discussed this subject with him again. Instead, he kept comforting himself deep inside—what if the situation wasn't what he was imagining?

First of all, Lu Boyuan hadn't clarified if he was dating someone in this circle or not. Second, he hadn't said whether his partner was male or female… what if Ding-*ge* was just overthinking things?

What's more, in all the years he had known Lu Boyuan, he had never heard anything about Lu Boyuan being gay before.

Jian Rong seemed even more like someone who was straighter than a damn telephone pole! Didn't he get scared by the male fan who confessed to him some time ago?

They were busy with the playoffs lately, and Ding-*ge* didn't want to face reality.

So he had decided to temporarily act as if he couldn't see or hear anything until the spring season ended—as long as he didn't get to the bottom of things, he could pretend like nothing was happening.

With the opening of that door, the wishful thinking that he had carefully nourished for so long suddenly shattered into pieces, clattering all over the ground.

Jian Rong hadn't paid much attention to Lu Boyuan's call, so he was also surprised when he saw Ding-*ge*. He subconsciously pressed his lips together and even straightened out his clothing—

Those little movements pushed Ding-*ge* even deeper into despair.

Despair aside, however, the experienced team manager's brain had already started automatically analyzing the current situation—

Two guys, starting players for the same team, the star jungler with the most fans in the LPL and the newcomer mid laner with the most controversy in the LPL were dating.

What would be the consequences of someone finding out about this?

…

Would anyone dare to fucking think about that????

In the midst of his panic, Ding-*ge* felt like he could see the anti forums filling the sky, the countless long Weibo posts, and the eggs smashed onto their gate.

Just as Jian Rong was trying to come up with an explanation, Lu Boyuan spoke first. "Give me the mock-ups."

Ding-*ge* let out an "*oh*" and handed the files over. Then, he glanced at Jian Rong with an incomparable calmness. "Why aren't you asleep yet?"

Jian Rong thought that Ding-*ge* hadn't noticed anything. "I'm about to."

Ding-*ge* nodded. "Go to bed."

A serene conversation, a serene 'good night,' a serene closing of the door.

Jian Rong only remembered that Lu Boyuan's towel was still hanging on his head after he walked over to his bed.

Ding-*ge* was still there. Jian Rong hesitated briefly before he decided to return it the next day.

He laid down on his side, pillowing his head on one arm.

...even though they had kissed so many times, his heart was still beating extremely fast.

When they kissed, the tips of their noses would always brush against one another. In the middle, if he half-opened his eyes in a daze, he could see the shadows cast by Lu Boyuan's eyelashes.

Jian Rong vaguely remembered something: the second before the phone rang, the hand that Lu Boyuan had placed on his waist had shifted.

It seemed to have tugged his shirt upwards a bit.

..... fuck.

Jian Rong unlocked his iPad in an attempt to find a trashy movie that could divert his attention and simultaneously put him to sleep. He instead discovered that he had 99+ notifications on his Weibo, all from other people mentioning him.

As a result, he went to take a look at his and Lu Boyuan's super topic... two looks, numerous looks.

Two minutes later, Jian Rong couldn't stay in there any longer. With questions like "*can this picture even be posted*," "*who the hell can actually do this position*," and "*did Weibo's verification department shut down?*" filling his head, he locked the iPad. Then he flipped over, buried his face in his pillow, and choked back a deep breath of air—

It was one thing to be with their teammates all day long, but the fact that someone could pop up even when they were in their own rooms at midnight, how the hell were they supposed to have fun like this...

Another person who shared the same opinion was currently standing on the balcony, being blown by the wind.

Struck with a sudden urge to smoke, Lu Boyuan's throat bobbed. He half-heartedly skimmed over the files before handing them back. "Let's just go with what's written on here. Don't make the prices too high, other than that, do as you want."

At that moment, Ding-*ge* was already no longer thinking about the merch. His brain was full of—

There's still a month till Lu Boyuan's birthday, why was laozi in such a rush to get all of this crap arranged in advance??

If he hadn't come upstairs tonight, he wouldn't have witnessed that scene, and he could've continued to pretend like he didn't know anything. He could've buried his head in the sand and gotten through this spring season…

Ding-*ge* nodded. "Sure… they've made a new batch of team merch recently too, and we're planning on selling them after the playoffs start. I told them to bring over the samples tomorrow, so you should find some time to market them on stream."

Lu Boyuan made a noise of assent.

Ding-*ge* rolled up the files in his hand and thought, *Some questions have to be asked*. "Last time when you said you got into a relationship, who is it with?"

Lu Boyuan leaned against the railing. "Jian Rong."

"…"

Before it was confirmed, he was in a frenzy, but now that it was solidified, he ended up calming down instead.

This was most likely the rumored feeling of '*resigning yourself to fate*.'

Ding-*ge* sucked in a deep breath of air before he pulled out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and lit one of them up.

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. “You said that you were going to set an example and quit smoking first, yet you have a box stashed in your pocket?”

Ding-*ge* stared into the distance. “Someone gave it to me earlier, it wasn’t polite to refuse.”

“Give me one.”

“Get lost, get lost.” Ding-*ge* exhaled a mouthful of smoke. “*Laozi*’s only smoking because I’m annoyed.”

“I’m also annoyed.”

“What are you annoyed about?!”

Lu Boyuan said breezily, “Should I try knocking on your door at midnight?”

Ding-*ge* choked and grew even more pissed. He didn’t say anything for quite a while.

A long time later, he asked, “What do you guys plan to do?”

Lu Boyuan replied with a question. “Regarding what?”

“BS, of course I’m talking about if you’re planning on making it public or not?” Ding-*ge* took a drag on his cigarette. “I have to be honest with you. I thought about it just now, and if you two make it public… it would create a huge earthquake in the esports circle.

“First of all, the last three generations of your and Jian Rong’s ancestors will be busy for some time. And also, you were the one who originally spoke up and recruited Jian Rong in for the team tryouts…”

Lu Boyuan interrupted him. “I didn’t have any ulterior motives.”

“I’m aware, you think I don’t know you? The important thing is how other people perceive it.” Ding-*ge* paused. “In any case, this is all pretty crazy. I have to know what you’re planning first.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Not making it public for now.”

Everything Ding-*ge* could imagine, as if Lu Boyuan couldn’t?

He personally didn’t care, but it wasn’t the same for Jian Rong.

A newcomer who had just joined the team, lacking a performance record and qualifications. Before a season even ended, that newcomer started dating the captain of the team… he could easily guess how horrendously Jian Rong would be flamed.

Perhaps with his disposition, Jian Rong wouldn’t take any of it to heart, but Lu Boyuan couldn’t bear to put him through that.

He needed a bit of time to consider how to minimize the aftermath as much as possible.

Although Lu Boyuan had said “*for now*,” Ding-*ge*’s worries were still put to rest. “Okay. I thought of something, maybe in the future you two should avoid arousing suspicion in public spaces and interact a little less…”

Lu Boyuan said, “I’m teammates with him, it’d be more strange if we didn’t interact.”

Ding-*ge* felt like that was also a fair point—like hell it was.

Lu Boyuan was basically implying that even if they didn’t make it public, he wasn’t about to change anything because he was afraid of being discovered.

“…forget it, do whatever you want.” Ding-*ge* bit down on his cigarette and said, defeated, “You two are constantly streaming and duo queueing together anyway, and the fans haven’t reacted poorly yet.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Mn.”

After they finished their discussion, Ding-*ge* smoked a few more cigarettes before he prompted Lu Boyuan, “Enough, you should go in and sleep. There’s still practice tomorrow.”

Lu Boyuan cast a look down at him. “You’re not going back?”

Ding-*ge* leaned against the banister, painting a miserable picture from behind. “I’ll leave after I get rid of the smell. With the scent of this smoke on me, if I’m not screwed over by you guys first, then I’ll be hammered to death by your sister-in-law…”

—

The team’s new merch was quickly sent over to the base.

Merchandise for esports teams always consisted of the same old items: things like keycaps, mouse pads, T-shirts, and hats.

This was Jian Rong's first time seeing his own ID printed on something; there was even a mini avatar with blue hair on the mouse pad. Though Jian Rong's face was mostly expressionless, he still picked each item up and inspected it.

There were two sets of each merch item. They could keep the other set as a collection for themselves, or they could give it away to a friend or relative.

As a mature middle-aged man, Ding-*ge* had already recovered after going home and lying motionless like a corpse for a night.

Over the phone, he spoke as he usually did to Jian Rong. "Do you see the shirt? During the next few days, you should wear that when you stream, give it a lot of marketing. If it sells well, you'll get a bigger share too."

Jian Rong didn't understand. "What's that mean?"

Ding-*ge* explained, "Every time someone buys one of your individual merch items, you'll receive a bonus… when you signed your contract, did you even read it?!"

Bonus…

Jian Rong looked at the pile of assorted items on the table and said, "Got it."

At noon, when the fans entered Soft's livestream room, they saw the streamer wearing deep blue from head to toe. He was dressed much more formally than he normally was while streaming, and he was even wearing a hat.

[Wearing a hat while streaming? And it's pulled so low too? What, you think you're so cool???]

[WTF why's your ID on this shirt?]

[What exactly are you trying to achieve by dressing in this dumbass way.]

As he was recalling to base, Jian Rong glanced at the barrage. Then he tilted his head to the side and revealed the ID on the right of his hat.

"Your dad's merch." Jian Rong drawled, "You can't tell?"

All the water friends typed out a "?".

"They're gonna be up for sale in a few days on the team's official website. There's also a shirt." Jian Rong suddenly stood up and lifted his leg, introducing each item, "Pants, shoelaces, socks…"

Next to him, Xiao Bai was shocked by this simple, honest, no frills marketing tactic, and he peered over with amazement written across his face.

[????]

[Who wants to see your stinky socks???]

[What the hell do shoelaces look like as merch? A money scam?]

[Who the fuck would dare to buy that, gonna go out on the streets while flaunting your ID and wait to be beaten up?]

[If you remove your ID, Dad will think about buying it hah.]

Jian Rong ignored their sarcastic comments and continued promoting the merch. “There’s also this keycap—if you put it on your keyboard, you’ll become as strong as your dad, and you can kill whoever you want.”

[What if you can’t kill someone?]

“If you can’t kill them, then surrender, what else can you do?” Jian Rong shifted the camera. “And then there’s this mouse pad. If you place it under your mouse, you’ll never miss a single minion. Buying it means winning, it’s your loss if you don’t buy it.”

[Are there any height-raising insoles? I’ll buy them all.]

[Call me Dad, and Dad will buy ten keycaps.]

[Stop talking stop talking, Dad has no interest in children’s clothing.]

[I remember that pro players all get bonuses from selling merch, right? Working so hard to promote it, what, did you go bankrupt?]

[What happened to your signing bonus? And your savings from the last two years? And the gift money that Daddy sent you?]

Jian Rong killed minions. “I didn’t go bankrupt, I want to save some more money.

“Why do I want to save money…” Jian Rong used his ult and oneshotted the enemy mid laner before he said very casually, “I’m saving it so the person I like can spend it.”

As he was speaking, the door to the practice room was pushed open.

Jian Rong subconsciously glanced behind him. Then, he was given a slight shock.

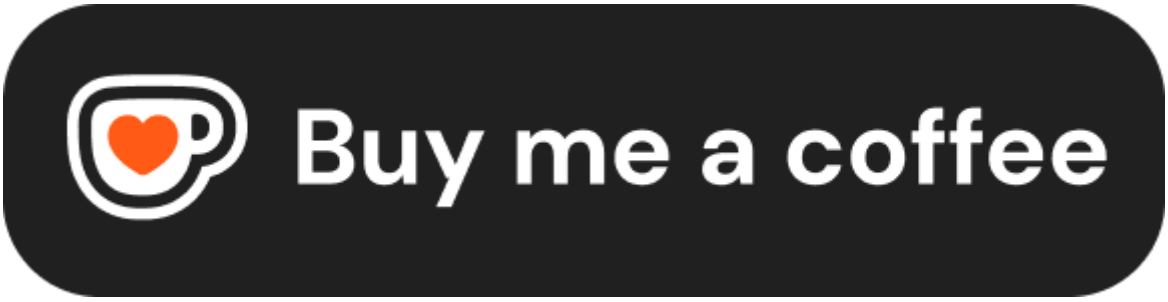
Lu Boyuan walked into the room, carrying breakfast in one hand and a merch hat in the other.

The hat was the same one Jian Rong was currently wearing. It was a deep blue color, with “*Soft*” written in white along the right side.

—

The author has something to say:

R-ong: Hello? Want to buy merch?



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ICDI Chapter 95: Shut up, trash.

Thank you to Kitty for the Ko-fi~

Jian Rong's head was turned, so he didn't realize that the barrage had already exploded—

[Who? You're going to take Dad's money to support who? Say that one more time???]

[You're still a child, this old woman won't allow you to date ahhhhh—]

[Dating right after joining the team, are you asking for a beating?]

[Everyone calm down, the little dumbass said 'the person he likes,' he didn't say that they're together yet. I bet that it's just an unrequited love. With his EQ, nothing will come of it.]

[Stop! The reason why we have all gathered here today is to listen to our little dumbass Soft, who we've flamed since his youth until now, market his merch. From the bottom of my heart, I bestow my blessings on him: after the merch goes on sale, may the amount sold be infinitely zero, just like my League Points. May the goods be stored until they're rotten and smelly!]

[Pure passerby here, is Road not the one he has an unrequited love for?]

[He definitely wasn't talking about Road, as if Road needs his support? Would Soft even be qualified??? Last year when Road walked on the red

carpet during the opening ceremony, his watch alone was worth more than Soft's signing fee!]

[Ah, is the little dumbass that cheaply priced? I admire the strong, I'm no longer a dad.]

[Don't worry, he'll become expensive in the next season… so who exactly does he like? I heard a rumor that he filmed a commercial with Qiuqiu some time ago.]

[It's okay if he's in a relationship, but not with a woman.]

Hearing noise, Yuan Qian also glanced behind him. "Captain, you're awake? Did you see Ding-*ge*'s text…"

Ding-*ge* had sent them a notification in the group chat bright and early that morning, telling them to stream and market the merch a lot over the next few days.

The profit they received from the bonus for their team's merch was quite considerable, and nobody would say no to money. First thing in the morning, the four of them all started streaming, and even Pine changed into his merch shirt.

Lu Boyuan said, "I saw it."

Yuan Qian looked at the hat in his hand and reminded him kindly, "You took the wrong one, Captain. You're holding Soft's hat."

Jian Rong was only wearing his headphones over one ear, so when he heard that, he swiftly licked his lips.

“Mn.” Lu Boyuan said succinctly, “I thought it looked nice, so I took it.”

Jian Rong: “…”

Yuan Qian: “…”

The game was still ongoing, and Jian Rong turned back around to play properly. Lu Boyuan swept a look at Jian Rong’s game interface before he went straight over to his own seat to power on his computer and eat breakfast.

“Speaking of which, what was up with Ding-*ge*.” Xiao Bai roasted, “Sending a group text at 5:30 in the morning. I forgot to put my phone on mute last night, so I was startled awake… didn’t he say that he was going to be a healthy middle-aged man and stop pulling all-nighters after he turned thirty?”

Yuan Qian shrugged. “Who knows, maybe he couldn’t fall asleep last night.”

After clearing out the enemy jungle, Jian Rong hit the B key and recalled to base. Only then did he finally respond to the barrage.

He ignored all the comments asking him who he liked and only answered the questions related to the merch. The water friends quickly began spamming the barrage, calling him a “*damn money grubber*,” and the topic was swept under the rug just like that.

Upon seeing how many comments Jian Rong was receiving in the barrage, Xiao Bai felt like this marketing tactic was quite effective. He was about to copy it when he saw the number of viewers in his stream suddenly decrease dramatically. In the span of a few seconds, over four thousand viewers dropped.

He turned pale with fright. “Damn, I haven’t even shown my socks yet, how come you all ran away! …oh, my *ge* started streaming? That’s fine then.”

The instant Lu Boyuan started his stream, the viewer counts in all the other LoL streams would always drop. Never mind the TTC members, even the other LoL streamers were used to it by now.

Lu Boyuan leaned back in his chair, eating his *youtiao*. His hair was disheveled, and he sat in a careless manner.

He was idling on the game client and clicked on the PC version of Happy Fight the Landlord as he chatted lazily with the barrage.

“Mn, a task assigned by our manager, marketing the merch.”

[Every time the manager isn’t there, God Lu’s stream feels super casual lolololol]

[Ahhh I’ll buy out all of my husband’s merch!!!]

[Not gaming?]

[Just checked, lately Road doesn’t play ranked for more than three hours each day, and there are even some days where he doesn’t play a single

game… this kind of person deserves to have the LPL's top salary?? What a joke.]

[If he doesn't deserve it, do you??]

[God Lu's hand probably hasn't been feeling too good, right? Also recently, all the teams have been doing practice matches, okay? The only reason why Soft plays ranked for so long is because he's aiming for rank one on the KR server.]

[When you put it that way, Soft really is climbing so fast in solo Q, it's only been a few days… and he's about to hit Challenger.]

[Where's the merch? Market it!]

In the video, Lu Boyuan was still wearing his usual clothing. He didn't have on any of the random accessories either.

He reached out to grab a certain item placed on the computer desk.

All the fans leaned in, anticipating the design of the new merch, until Lu Boyuan pulled out a deep blue baseball cap.

[Ah? This? …looks a little familiar?]

[Looks familiar +1]

[……I went to check just now, isn't this Soft's freaking merch??]

Lu Boyuan seized the landlord position. In front of a screen full of question marks, he put the hat back down on the table and assessed, "The color

scheme is pretty good, it should go fairly well with any item of clothing.

“They said to market the merch, but they didn’t say whose merch to market.

“Why market for him?” Lu Boyuan laughed. “Because I like… this hat.”

Ding-*ge*’s WeChat messages streamed in like fragile snowflakes, instantly occupying Lu Boyuan’s entire phone screen.

Xiao Bai immediately held up his own hat and whipped his head around. “*Ge*! Check out my hat, it looks way better than Jian Rong’s!”

Jian Rong felt his heart skip a few beats with Lu Boyuan’s words. He shot a glance at Xiao Bai’s hat before he said coldly, “Looks way better my ass.”

After Lu Boyuan finished a round of Fight the Landlord, he picked up his phone and comforted Ding-*ge* a bit. Then he raised his head and saw that the barrage was asking him why he still hadn’t started playing ranked yet.

“Waiting for someone, he still hasn’t finished his current game.” Lu Boyuan paused for a moment and said evenly, “I forgot to ask if he’s willing to queue with me.”

Right as he said that, a message popped up on Jian Rong’s screen.

[(Friend) Road: *carry me god jian?*]

God Jian…

This was Jian Rong’s first time being called that.

He imagined Lu Boyuan's voice saying that before he instantly stopped himself and responded rapidly.

[(Friend) softsndd: …*okay*]

The water friends in both streams were completely baffled—

The two of you are in the same practice room, so what's the point of sending private messages in game? Is it not more convenient to just open your mouth and shout?? Will the others think that you're being too noisy or something???

Jian Rong quickly ended the game before they formed a party together and entered the matchmaking queue.

Over the in-game voice chat, Jian Rong could hear that Lu Boyuan was still chatting with the barrage. "Will I get a bonus for helping him market his merch? I don't know, let me ask him…"

Jian Rong said, "Yes."

Afraid of being found out, Jian Rong maintained a stiff expression the entire time, and his tone of voice was also particularly harsh.

Lu Boyuan could tell, and he gave a deep huff of laughter. "Never mind. If it sells well, you can just treat me to a meal."

Jian Rong fiddled with his headphones. "I will… I'll treat you to whatever you want."

“Then, scallion oil noodles.” Lu Boyuan said nonchalantly, “The place you took me to last time was pretty delicious.”

Jian Rong: “…”

Ding-*ge*, who was currently out of town discussing a business contract, stared closely at the stream on his phone.

Although he had no clue what they were saying, judging from the look on Jian Rong’s face… it evidently wasn’t a normal conversation that would occur between teammates.

Ding-*ge* reached up and pinched his philtrum, debating if he should cancel his hot spring plans for the evening and fly back to the base early so that he could unplug their jungler’s internet cable.

Luckily, they soon queued into a game.

Jian Rong also felt relieved. He subconsciously glanced at the chat box, wanting to check if they had run into any familiar actor IDs—

[XIUXIUXIU: *wtf*…]

[Savior: wow RoadSoft!]

They crashed cars with XIU and Savior, who were also duo queuing together on the Korean server.

It was very common to crash cars with pro players on the Korean server. At night, sometimes ten pro players or a team of trainees would even match into the same game together.

Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan got the mid laner and jungler roles.

The four of them exchanged greetings with each other before they each picked their champions. Two minutes later, the game entered the loading screen.

Jian Rong was about to pour himself a cup of water when Lu Boyuan suddenly said, “The other side’s bot lane also has pro players.”

Jian Rong was startled. “Who are they?”

“The support is Squid’s Doufu.” Lu Boyuan paused. “The Draven is HT’s ADC, Rish.”

When Jian Rong heard “HT,” he let go of his cup and sat back down.

As the strongest team in the LCK, all of HT’s members were highly ranked. Since Jian Rong had begun playing on the Korean server again up to now, this was his first time encountering someone from this team.

Originally, XIU wanted to have a relaxed game, which was why he told Savior to be in the bot lane with him. However, he hadn’t expected for them to run into the ADC from last year’s world champion team right off the bat.

After they entered the game, he immediately started typing.

[XIUXIUXIU: *Gank bot more, I can’t beat him, this bastard is on Draven too.*]

Lu Boyuan was playing Nocturne this round; the champion needed its ult before it could easily gank.

[Road: *I'll gank after level 6, be careful, if you can't beat him then wait for me under the tower.*]

[XIUXIUXIU: OK.]

At first, XIU just wanted to furtively kill minions, but unexpectedly, the enemy jungler decided to behave rudely and headed straight for the bot lane at level 3.

Jian Rong was in the middle of suppressing the opposing mid laner under the tower when he heard the sound of an announcement. Their bot lane had been double killed by the other team.

In the barrage, a bunch of people instantly started flaming PUD for being trash.

"The enemy bot lane has Draven and Nautilus, which is a fierce combination all on its own. Also, their jungler gave up their resources to gank bot at level 3, so it's normal for them to have been killed." Jian Rong said indifferently, "Mods, pay attention, block and kick the people stirring up trouble right away."

Right as he said that, a message suddenly popped up in the all chat.

It was sent by HT's ADC Rish, and it was in Korean, so Jian Rong couldn't read it.

He was about to ignore it when Rish followed up with a few more messages. Then, Savior responded to him.

Jian Rong only sensed that something was off when some water friends who could read Korean began fervently insulting HT in the barrage. “What did he say? What do those Korean messages mean?”

Before the water friends could translate, Road spoke mildly first.

“He asked Savior if he can still even understand Korean or not… he said that Savior grew weaker after coming to the LPL, and he asked him if it’s very easy to earn money in the LPL.”

In an instant, the stream’s barrage exploded.

Jian Rong’s expression also grew frosty. “Is this person a dumbass?”

Lu Boyuan hummed. “Seems like it.”

The barrage helped translate the ensuing conversation for Jian Rong—

[Rish: I heard that after you went to the LPL, you even needed to beg the little teams from our LCK for practice matches. How pitiful, Savior.]

[Savior: The team only did that because we wanted to get stronger, *ge*[1].]

[Rish: Do people in the LPL all use Korean to communicate with each other too? Since it’s full of Koreans anyway.]

[Savior: The import player system is allowed in every competitive region, *ge*.]

Jian Rong frowned. “He’s still calling this dumbass ‘*ge*’ even after being mocked this much?”

Lu Boyuan explained, “It’s probably habit, there’s a heavy emphasis on seniority in Korea.”

[*Ai*, actually, all Savior has to do is not interact with him.]

[Damn, Doufu’s just gonna sit there in that team and watch Rish ridicule the LPL? And he still isn’t gonna troll???]

[Do you think everyone’s like the little dumbass? I went to check Doufu’s stream, in fact he’s also insulting Rish.]

[Ah this moron spoke again. Quick, someone translate!]

[Rish: Is the mid laner on your team Soft? That megalomaniac who said he’s gonna make it to rank one on the Korean server?]

[Rish: What garbage, I heard that he purposefully toys with his teammates during ranked, right? Oh Savior, did you go to the LPL just to make these kinds of friends?]

[Savior: He’s a very good friend, don’t say anything else, *ge*.]

[What the hell, I’ve long since heard that those people in HT frequently ridicule the LPL in private, but now it looks like it’s really true!!!]

[Can you report him??]

[He didn’t use any profanity… he’s just taunting, so you probably can’t report him. Ugh, I’m gonna throw up.]

[Dammit, he's already been mocked to this degree, why isn't the little dumbass letting out a single peep?!]

[He's probably focused on the game and didn't see the translation in the barrage.]

But then, Jian Rong's LeBlanc blinked and flung out a chain before he smoothly used the second part of the skill to oneshot the enemy mid laner. He turned around and walked back under his own tower to recall to base.

After that, he calmly minimized the LoL game interface and pulled up a web browser. He searched "*online translator*" in Baidu and changed the target language to Korean before he started typing—

'Dumbass why do you have so much bullshit to say in a ranked game? Yeah, the LPL has money to buy import players, as if you possibly have any right to blather on about something that has the mutual consent of both leagues? And also, does this have anything to do with you at all? No matter who the LPL buys, they wouldn't ever buy a noob like you. Is your starter position even secured yet for you to be out here shading other people?'

Jian Rong translated the text into Korean and returned to the game before he hit ctrl+v and pasted it into the chat box. Just as he was about to hit send, his screen suddenly darkened; it was the special effect from Nocturne's ult.

Immediately after, an announcement sounded in Korean—

Lu Boyuan had used his ult to fly to the bot lane, directly solo killing Rish, who had just entered the lane alone.

And he had also said something in Korean in the all chat.

Someone promptly translated in the barrage—

[Road: Shut up, trash.]

Translation Notes

1. *Since it's technically a Korean to Chinese translation, I left 'ge' as 'ge' – but in Korean it would've been hyung* ^

Yan: If you want to know what Soft's merch hat looks like, check out the cover of this novel – Road is wearing it ☺ And also, a reminder that I italicized the text if they're using pinyin to communicate (can't type Chinese on the Korean server, can only type in pinyin).

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 96: Jian Rong felt like he was about to leave the earth.

Thank you to L and Ko-Fi Supporter for the Ko-fis!

Ding-*ge*'s texts came in like an avalanche. Finally, when he truly couldn't convey his emotions through his messages anymore, he directly called Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan cleared some monsters and recalled to base before he answered the call.

"Mn.

"I'm marketing the merch. The water friends are reacting pretty well.

"We crashed cars, so I was just chatting a bit… coming back this afternoon? Weren't you going to stay overnight? Up to you, safe travels."

His voice was calm, as if the person on the other end was telling him "*there's a clear and boundless sky in Beijing today I kind of miss you*." However, in reality, each one of Ding-*ge*'s sentences contained up to three "*fucks*."

[Hahahahahaha Ding-*ge*'s so loud I can hear him even without speaker mode]

[Thankfully Ding-*ge* wasn't watching Soft's stream, or else he could've taken flight on the spot and flown back to Shanghai with how pissed off he

would've been by the words typed in the chat box.]

[Damn, I never expected that God Lu would speak up… I've never seen God Lu insult someone in a public setting before.]

[That host from last time…?]

[At the most, he was just calling him out, it can't be considered an insult. But… the reason he called out the host last time was because the host was stirring up drama about Soft, while this time, it's because Rish mocked Soft. This…]

[Is it not because that dumbass was mocking the LPL this time?]

[Stop talking stop talking, it's my dumbass son's fault, femme fatale!]

[Someone just told me to my face that HT was amazing. I beat him up to the point he had to go to the hospital, did I do it right, my bros?]

[It's true that internally, HT looks down on the LPL, including the team's staff. Even Master frequently ridicules the LPL publicly in interviews. There's probably something really wrong with the heads of the people who are still fans of this kind of team.]

Ever since Lu Boyuan joined the LPL, he had never once openly mocked another pro player before. When he was in the prime of his youth, he had felt like it was beneath him to do such a thing, while now, there was no need for him to.

Which was why after XIU heard Savior's translation, he asked two consecutive questions—"*did he really say that?*" and "*did you just blindly translate for me do you know what trash means?*"—before he stopped next to the second tower in shock and typed—

[XIUXIUXIU: *Bro?*]

Naturally, when XIU heard what Rish had said, he was also angry. But perhaps since he had been in a team made up of Korean import players for a long time and had been extensively flamed as a "Korean team" before, he was already immune to it. What's more, speaking rudely for the sake of a dumbass, giving antis more material for no good reason, and perhaps even having to eat a penalty—no matter how you looked at it, there was nothing to gain.

Lu Boyuan glanced at XIU's message. He was about to say something when Rish started going at it again.

[Rish: *Ge*, good afternoon, no need to insult someone.]

In all the other competitive leagues, Lu Boyuan was the most popular pro player from the LPL. When he went to Korea to compete before, mass amounts of Lu Boyuan's support banners could be found in the audience, even in the home stadiums of those top tier Korean teams.

On top of that, he had received Best Jungler for several consecutive years, easily making him a senior figure in the LCK.

But last year, Rish had just become a starter for the LCK's strongest team, HT, and he was only a bit older than Savior, so he was still quite full of

himself.

[Rish: *Ge*, has your team's previous mid laner already been fired?]

[Rish: The team still didn't search well for a mid laner, it's truly such a waste of your team's configuration ah *ge*. The new mid laner on *ge*'s team seems also to be no good.]

[Rish: If my words made *ge* unhappy, I'm very sorry, but can *ge* make it into the MSI this year? I want to apologize to *ge* in person.]

[Savior: Damn brat, interacting with your seniors even in the middle of a game, did your team's management not teach you how to respect your seniors?—XIU-*ge* told me to send that, *ge*.]

Who knows if XIU's message had gotten through to Rish or if he had been ganked by his manager. Either way, he stopped talking.

"Whatcha doing?" Lu Boyuan's voice dragged Jian Rong out of his thoughts. "Camping me?"

In order to read the barrage's translations, Jian Rong had idled for a short while in the bushes next to the raptor camp.

At that current moment, Lu Boyuan's Nocturne was standing right in front of him.

"No, I was reading the translations." Jian Rong deleted his message from the chat box and wiggled his mouse. "You know Korean?"

Lu Boyuan said, "I know a little."

“You hardly just ‘know a little’…” Yuan Qian remembered something. “That year we won the championships, we were in Korea for the competition. At the time, there was pressure on Fu-*ge* from our sister-in-law, so we were a bit short on funds. Over in Korea, every translator was in charge of at least six freaking teams, so they all had their hands full. Xiao Bai and I had already come up with gestures for ‘let’s eat,’ ‘you’re so amazing’ and ‘are you a dumbass.’ Then Captain spoke, and good grief, his Korean was level 100.”

“Wah, back then I thought that my *ge* had walked out of a k-drama.” Xiao Bai instantly interjected, “None of those Park or Seok-something actors could compare to my *ge*.”

Jian Rong thought back briefly. The year they won Worlds, it seemed like Lu Boyuan was only eighteen?

“Don’t listen to their nonsense.” Lu Boyuan said mildly, “Let’s go.”

Jian Rong followed after him. “Where are we going?”

“The blue buff first.” Lu Boyuan checked the minimap and entered the enemy’s jungle like he was returning to his old home. “Then the bot lane.”

Meanwhile, Doufu felt as if he had been going against the current this entire spring season.

During the very first match of the season, he had brought out his signature champion only for it to be utterly slaughtered. From that point on, he hadn’t been able to recover, and something had felt off every time he

played. In the end, they only won one match in the spring season and had to directly bid farewell to the playoffs.

Now, he couldn't even rest easy in a ranked game!

First, he didn't get ADC, and the system automatically filled him into the support role. Then to add to that, his ADC partner was a moronic Korean pro player who hadn't said a single decent thing since the start of the game until now—if Doufu hadn't been given a red warning by his team's manager, he would've long since freaking AFKed and left!

But all of that aside.

Doufu lifted his head and glanced at his score: 0/4/4.

Then he opened the scoreboard to check Rish's score—Draven's 1/8/3.

Right off the bat, Rish had offended the other team's mid laner and jungler, and the opposing bot lane had immediately set up a Summoner's Rift-edition mahjong tournament[1]. The moment they entered the lane, the other four people were waiting for them. The jungler on Doufu's team was also an unimpressive random player, so the enemy team succeeded in their ganks almost every single time. Finally, Doufu's team had no choice but to abandon the towers and run away.

It vaguely felt as if he had returned to this spring season's first match. His entire brain was filled with the scene of Zed chasing him, out for blood.

After being brutally murdered in another mini team fight, Doufu stared at the person dancing on top of his corpse. At last, he couldn't hold back any

longer. He clicked on the chat and furiously typed out in *pinyin*—

[doufugg: *You're dancing on the wrong fucking person! The one on the right is that dumbass Rish! Motherfucker!!!*]

Jian Rong, who was dancing on Doufu's dead body and flashing his icon, paused for a split second.

[softsndd: *Oh, sorry*.]

One of Doufu's teammates kept refusing to surrender. With great difficulty, Doufu managed to last until the opposing side pushed their base, and he sucked in a deep breath before he fished out his cigarettes with a shaking hand.

In the game, Jian Rong spoke again and sent out several long messages in a row. Doufu didn't even need to guess to know that he was flaming Rish.

The cigarette dangled from Doufu's mouth as he waited for the water friends in the barrage to translate.

[softsndd: Just wait for MSI, dumbass]

Doufu drew in a mouthful of smoke. Suddenly, he felt like the points that he lost this game didn't really matter that much anymore.

[softsndd: Wait for Dad to knock you down from your starting position]

Doufu smiled slightly, feeling good.

He exhaled smoke and said to the audience in the stream, “You know, this bastard does occasionally say some reasonable things…”

[softsndd: Your Draven is even more trash than the support next to you, who’re you trying to show off to?]

Doufu: “…”

Doufu spat out his cigarette. He had long since stopped caring about what color warning he was on, and his voice reverberated through the entire base. “……Soft you fucker!!!!”

Ding-*ge* rushed back from Beijing that night and returned to the base with milk tea and the intent to murder his team members.

When he arrived at the base, the team was sitting in front of the living room TV watching a match. The playoffs had already started, and the lower-ranking teams had to compete for the opportunity to play against TTC or PUD in the semifinals.

“Thanks to you all, PUD’s manager said that he’s going to work with the other teams to send me a brocade banner, expressing their gratitude for you two venting this grievance on behalf of the LPL.” There were tears accompanying Ding-*ge*’s smile and resentment hidden in his tears. “None of you were there, so I have no way of describing to you guys just how shady that dog bastard’s voice was. On my way back, I wanted to change my route to PUD’s base so many times, but I resisted in the end.”

Xiao Bai said considerately, “It’s okay, even if you really had gone, we still would’ve thought of a way to rescue you.”

Ding-*ge* fumed. “Much appreciated.”

Before Ding-*ge* left, he was actually feeling pretty reassured. He felt like Jian Rong couldn’t make too much of a mess with Lu Boyuan here.

He hadn’t expected for Lu Boyuan to ult in and start the team fight first all on his own.

Currently, the implicated party didn’t seem to have any regrets.

Lu Boyuan leaned back against the sofa and asked, “Does HT have some sort of initiation ceremony? For example, before they can join the team, they have to be subjected to Master’s brainwashing or something like that…”

The other party involved ducked his head and took a sip of the milk tea that Ding-*ge* had brought over. “What do you mean?”

“Master often ridicules Korean imports who come to compete in the LPL… which is why those Korean trolls all worship him a lot.” Yuan Qian explained, “Now that you mention it, it is kind of weird. Every pro player who joins HT really does like to look down on the LPL, the other Korean teams aren’t like this.”

Pine: “Even with that being the case, some LPL teams still tried to lure over Master this year.”

“*Ss*… after what we did today, the trolls on the Korean and Chinese servers are definitely going to surge up again.” Xiao Bai wrinkled his face. “What happens if we don’t win MSI?”

“There’s no ‘if.’” Jian Rong interrupted coldly. “We can win.”

Lu Boyuan glanced at him. The teenager’s brows were furrowed, his lips pressed tightly together. Clearly, he was still submerged in the urge to crush Rish’s dog head.

Jian Rong always acted very imposing whenever he said something like this, so it was easy for someone to forget—

“MSI… have you guys won the spring season yet, to talk about MSI?!” Ding-*ge* came back to himself. “The freaking semifinals haven’t even happened!”

Yuan Qian burst out laughing before he suddenly recalled something else. “Then what about their streams, the two of them won’t be fined again, right?”

Xiao Bai: “They were just fined not too long ago, it’ll be a second strike if they’re penalized again…”

“Fined my ass.” Ding-*ge*’s emotions were influenced by theirs. “Someone else started it first, if they’re gonna be penalized, then Rish has to be too. If they’re all fined together, then I’ll concede. But if only the LPL is punished and not the LCK, I swear I’ll find a water army to drown the management at Riot…”

The TV was broadcasting the match between MFG and UUG. The female mid laner from MFG continued to work hard and successfully carried her entire team again this game, helping MFG win the second round of a BO3 match.

The young woman picked up her water bottle and stood up, expressionless, before she went backstage to prepare for the next game.

Yuan Qian sighed. “This female mid laner is improving so quickly. We won’t be playing in the semifinals against MFG, will we?”

Ding-*ge*’s attention was instantly diverted. “It’s possible. I feel like if it’s not them, then it’ll be Fighting Tiger. MFG played very well in their last match of the regular season.”

Lu Boyuan asked, “Did you download the match recording?”

The team’s staff would always download every single match, so that the coaches could browse through them whenever they wanted to.

Ding-*ge*: “I did, but it’s on my laptop, which is in the car…”

“I have it on my tablet.” Jian Rong asked without thinking much of it, “Do you want to watch it?”

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow in surprise and said, “Sure.”

Xiao Bai looked amazed, and he wore a ‘*my son has grown*’ expression on his face. “You watch game recordings?!”

Jian Rong ignored him.

Actually, he didn’t watch them too frequently, but whenever he came across a brilliant game or an opponent he wanted to research more about, he would still go to specifically download the recording of that match or ranked game.

The female mid laner from MFG was on his recent research list, but since he was too busy climbing to rank one on the Korean server lately, he didn't have time to watch the recording yet.

Jian Rong came downstairs with his tablet and handed it to Lu Boyuan. "It's in cloud storage, the very first video."

Lu Boyuan tapped on the screen. A photo of Little Orange with his butt sticking out lit up.

The corners of his lips twitched and he asked, "What's the password?"

Jian Rong, who usually used his fingerprint to unlock the tablet, paused. He chewed on the straw for his milk tea and sprawled back against the couch before he leaned towards Lu Boyuan. "Four ones or four eights? Try both."

Lu Boyuan typed in four eights, and the tablet successfully unlocked.

Lying peacefully on the screen was the app interface that the tablet's owner had forgotten to close out of after looking at it last night.

Jian Rong stared at the "*TTC mid/jungler 18+ fanart*" that he had "accidentally" opened yesterday night. With a *crack*, he bit down and completely broke through the plastic milk tea straw.

The commentators' voices coming from the TV drew far away from him.

The sound of his teammates chatting nearby also drew far away from him.

When Lu Boyuan's index finger pressed against the screen and scrolled downwards on the drawing, Jian Rong felt like he was about to leave the

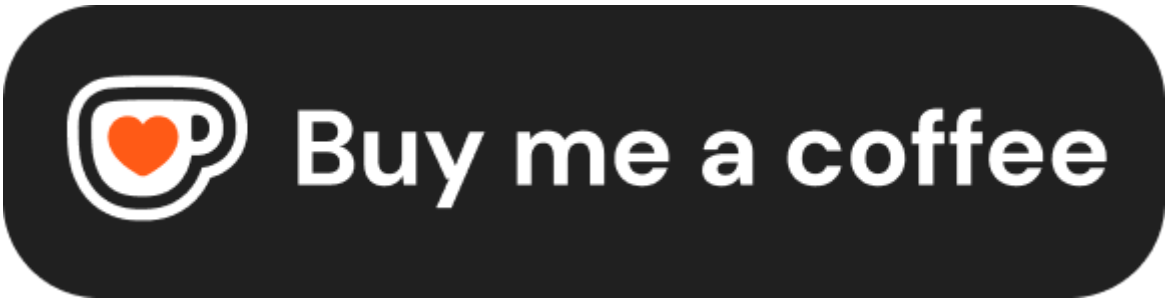
earth.

Translation Notes

1. *I tried researching but I have no idea if this is a meme – I think maybe it's just saying JR, LBY, Savior and XIU are out there camping Rish* ^

Wei: Omg… Jian Rong…. Why do these things always happen to you my son adfhalh why don't you learn from your past mistakes

Also!! In case you missed it, we made a Discord server! Come join us to get updates and fangirl about ICDI (and other novels!)~



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ICDI Chapter 97: ?

Thank you to riingo for the generous Ko-fi!

Jian Rong was so embarrassed that even his face turned red. He reached out with his hand to block the screen, but halfway there Lu Boyuan grabbed his hand and wedged it underneath his own arm.

Lu Boyuan said, “Don’t move, let me take a look.”

The third round of the match between MFG and UUG started. The others were enthusiastically discussing the team compositions and predicting who would win or lose, so nobody could hear what the two of them were talking about. They were sitting close together, and if you didn’t look too carefully, you wouldn’t be able to tell that Jian Rong’s hand was being squeezed underneath Lu Boyuan’s elbow.

Jian Rong tugged once but couldn’t pull his hand free. As a result, he could only pretend to be calm as he explained, “…someone mentioned me in the comments below.”

Dammit.

He had turned off the tablet last night precisely because he thought that the position being depicted in this drawing was simply impossible. Looking at it again, it seemed even more absurd.

After Lu Boyuan finished viewing the drawing, he proceeded to click on the super topic that OP had written out in the post.

The top post in the super topic was another drawing, but it wasn't as explicit as the other one. Lu Boyuan glanced at the little yellow star on the top right corner of the screen, which indicated that the Weibo account was following this super topic. He said, amused, "Someone mentioned you in here too?"

Jian Rong pressed his lips together numerous times before he finally gave up and said in resignation, "I came across it on my own."

"*Ss*—that was a pretty good move by MFG, I feel like their top laner has also improved." Yuan Qian tilted his head over. "Did you find the video? Could you maybe send it to me through WeChat too."

"The match is live right now, why're you in such a rush to watch a recording? This current match is the one that most accurately shows what state they're in." Ding-*ge* swiveled around. "You guys…"

When he saw the position that their team's mid laner and jungler were in, his words got stuck in his mouth. "You guys…"

"Found it." Lu Boyuan replied to Yuan Qian before he locked the screen and placed the tablet next to his leg. "Let's watch the broadcast first."

Lu Boyuan let go of Jian Rong's hand. Jian Rong was momentarily startled, and he actually felt like his palm was a bit cold… he slowly drew his hand back and stuffed it into his pocket.

Ding-*ge*'s '*unafraid even if the emperor came down himself*' attitude fled very swiftly. Right after the match ended, someone called from the LPL.

He hastily answered the phone, stood up, and walked towards the balcony. "*Ai*, I was about to call you… I really have to explain this incident properly to you, it's not like what the spectators are reporting it to be. Those antis never distinguish between what's right and wrong…"

Yuan Qian called out that he was going back to practice, and Xiao Bai followed behind Pine, pestering him to duo queue together. Jian Rong stood up with his milk tea and tried to take a sip from it before he realized that he couldn't suck up anything with his broken straw.

Ding-*ge*'s voice floated in from the balcony. "Xiao Lu, come over here for a moment!"

Jian Rong stared at the small amount of milk tea left in his cup, and he was about to toss it when someone took the cup away from him. Immediately after, another cup of milk tea that was more than half-full was stuffed into his hand.

Only then did Lu Boyuan turn his head and reply lazily, "Got it."

Upon returning to the practice room, Jian Rong kept feeling as if something wasn't quite right.

He won two consecutive ranked games and was finally promoted to Challenger. Next to him, Xiao Bai caught sight of the special effects from the advancement.

"Good news good news!" Xiao Bai said to the fans in his livestream, "Our mid laner has climbed to Challenger and is another step closer to becoming rank one on the Korean server!" He clapped.

Then he shot another glance at Jian Rong's desk and asked longingly, "Are you going to drink your milk tea? If not, give it to me, don't waste it…"

Xiao Bai's scheming little plump hand was slapped by Jian Rong.

Jian Rong picked up the milk tea and took a big sip from it before he set it back down on the other side of the desk.

"Hey, Xiao Rong." Yuan Qian looked behind him. "You don't need to send me that match recording anymore, I downloaded it on my own."

Jian Rong: "……"

Fuck! *Laozi*'s tablet!!!

Jian Rong shot to his feet and whipped around with the intention of charging downstairs—then, through the glass door, he saw Lu Boyuan and Ding-*ge* walking upstairs together, discussing something. Lu Boyuan had stuffed both hands into his pockets, with Jian Rong's iPad sandwiched underneath his right arm—

Just like that, he went up to the third floor.

"Do I have faith that he'll reach rank one? Of course I do, I even have faith that we'll win the championship. Rank one on the Korean server is hardly anything, isn't that right, Jian Rong…" Xiao Bai said as he glanced over, only to be taken aback. "What are you doing? Going to the bathroom?"

Jian Rong didn't answer him as he slowly sank back down in his seat. He propped himself up on his elbows and fiercely rubbed his face with his

hands.

Xiao Bai was perplexed. “What, if you need to pee, then just go…”

Jian Rong: “Shut up.”

This was Jian Rong’s first time feeling like their practice quota was so incredibly long.

After reaching his target score for the day, he finally couldn’t help but pull out his phone.

[R-ong: My tablet… are you done using it?]

[R: Finished with practice?]

[R-ong: Mn, just ended]

[R: Come and get it.]

The door to Lu Boyuan’s room was a tiny bit ajar. Jian Rong had already prepared himself to see Ding-*ge* inside as well, discussing business, but when he pushed open the door and entered, only Lu Boyuan was there.

Lu Boyuan sat at the head of his bed, calling someone. The phone was on speaker, and XIU’s voice came from the other end. The tablet was resting on his legs, with MFG’s match playing silently on the screen.

For pro players, the commentators weren’t that important, and they could understand what was going on even with the game on mute.

XIU was in the middle of saying that Savior hadn't been affected, before he asked Lu Boyuan if he had been lectured.

Jian Rong didn't interrupt, but he also couldn't immediately take the tablet away. He sat down in the chair next to Lu Boyuan's bed and decided to wait until he was done with his call.

XIU: "However, both of them are young, so it's whatever for them to go and straighten out that dumbass, but why did you have to join in too? In any case, that dumbass wouldn't dare to talk bad about you…"

"I was annoyed, so I said it." Lu Boyuan's voice was mild. "Do you need anything else? If not, I'm hanging up."

"What's the rush, let's chat a little more. It's not like your coach is letting you practice tonight anyway…"

"There's someone next to me."

"…"

XIU understood very well what he was implying and quickly hung up.

Lu Boyuan tossed his phone to the side. "There's still a while left in this match, wait until I'm done watching?"

"Okay." Jian Rong paused. "Did you smoke?"

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. "I smoked one out on the balcony, got it from Ding-*ge*… is the smell really strong?"

Even Ding-*ge* was willing to give him a cigarette. Jian Rong frowned. "What did the LPL say, is it a fine or a competition ban? If they're gonna penalize you, shouldn't they also penalize me?"

"No penalty. We just got onto the topic of our match against HT last year, so the craving set in." Lu Boyuan didn't elaborate further. All of a sudden, he realized something and turned his head to ask, "Those last few messages you sent earlier today… was that on purpose?"

Actually, by the latter half of that game, nobody was interacting anymore, but Jian Rong still gave Rish a mocking at the end. In comparison, Lu Boyuan's "*trash*" didn't seem quite so severe. That way, if antis decided to seize the opportunity to stir up drama later on, they wouldn't really dump the blame onto Lu Boyuan.

"I already wanted to insult him." Jian Rong remembered the things Rish had said, and his eyes narrowed. "If we encounter this kind of dumbass again, don't say anything, just let me handle it. In any case, the water friends in my stream are used to it by now."

Lu Boyuan went quiet for two seconds before he said, "You probably didn't understand."

Jian Rong looked up from the match recording. "?"

Lu Boyuan said evenly, "I'm not dating for the sake of finding a boyfriend to help me insult people."

"…"

Lu Boyuan glanced up at him. “Why do you think I responded to him today? What does PUD getting flamed have anything to do with me?”

PUD itself wasn’t even worried, so of course Lu Boyuan wouldn’t get mixed up in it.

But that dumbass had dragged Jian Rong into the mess.

Jian Rong’s eyelids twitched, and he said, “I know, but I have a previous record. If I insult someone, those water friends won’t think much of it…”

“That’s not it.” Lu Boyuan said, amused, “Jian Rong, I’ve been meaning to ask… isn’t your idol filter of me a bit too strong?”

Jian Rong paused and didn’t reply.

Lu Boyuan had hooked him in when he was only thirteen, and then he had watched him compete for a few years. After that, Jian Rong also ended up joining the team because of Lu Boyuan… so how could he not look at him through a filter.

In fact, the reason he came up with the idea of streaming LoL to earn money was also because of Lu Boyuan’s announcement at the time, saying that he had signed a contract with a streaming platform.

When Jian Rong first started streaming, he had felt a little embarrassed, so he had worn Lu Boyuan’s merch hat for several streams. Even though it had been a bit ridiculously large, he always thought that it was very cool back then.

Lu Boyuan watched as Jian Rong's index finger continued to pick steadily at the seat cushion. He suddenly said, "Ding-*ge* only started smoking after he joined the team."

Surprised, Jian Rong blinked once.

"Because I kept arguing with him." Lu Boyuan's voice seemed somewhat heavy in the quiet room. "We argued every day. Whenever I didn't join the team fight in a match, we fought; if I didn't cooperate and participate in commercial campaigns, we also fought. When Ding-*ge* first joined, he was quite energetic, but after we were done with the LSPL, a box of cigarettes a day wasn't even enough for him…

"Back when I used to stay in illegal internet cafes, I was young and ignorant. I let the game get to my head, and I would constantly challenge people to solos. The way I talked wasn't much better either, I ended up provoking all the regulars in the illegal internet cafe."

Jian Rong asked, "Did you ever lose?"

Lu Boyuan went silent for a moment. "One of my accounts was even locked away, what do you think?"

Jian Rong frowned. "You didn't try to find them for a rematch?"

"They moved away, so I couldn't contact them… is that what's important here?" Lu Boyuan laughed out of exasperation.

He was trying to say that he himself had also struggled through challenges to emerge from the illegal internet cafe, and that he had done his fair share

of flaming, fighting, and shaming others.

Nowadays, people always liked to hold him up on a pedestal, but in reality, apart from his family being fairly wealthy, he was no different from other professional gamers. Just like them, he would ridicule and flame people when he couldn't hold back any longer; the only exception was that he was too lazy to do so in a public setting. If Ding-*ge* hadn't called him then, there were uglier things that might've been said.

Lu Boyuan had never once thought about concealing certain parts of his personality in front of his fans, nor was he afraid of what the antis would say about him. He especially didn't need Jian Rong to use this kind of method to divert the attention and shield him.

Of course, Jian Rong understood what he meant. But…

He rubbed his nose. "But I just don't want you to get fined… is that not okay?"

Lu Boyuan was startled.

"What's that dumbass worth, why should you get penalized because of him? Also, those antis in the stream, they can find a way to vilify anything, and they really like to create side accounts, so the mods can't even block them all. It's not like I can insult them back using your name, so I might as well just let them flame me, that way I can still argue back."

After Jian Rong finished speaking, Lu Boyuan mulled it over for a while.

Jian Rong continued, “And the one that he was mocking in the first place was also me, so it’s normal for me to insult him back, nobody would take it too seriously…”

“Wait a moment, Jian Rong.”

“Mn?”

Restraining a smile, Lu Boyuan asked, “Is this how you flamers show your love?”

“…”

Jian Rong’s expression very evidently darkened a little. A long time passed before he finally said stiffly, “Probably.”

Lu Boyuan couldn’t resist. He tilted his head to the side and let out a deep laugh.

Originally, Jian Rong didn’t think much of it, but when Lu Boyuan laughed, he also started to feel as if his way of doing things was pretty stupid.

Unable to bear it, he saw that the video on the tablet was done playing and had stopped automatically, so he pursed his lips and stood up, reaching for the iPad. “If you’re done watching, I’ll take it back.”

“No…” Lu Boyuan grabbed his wrist. “I wasn’t laughing at you, I was just feeling… quite happy.”

Jian Rong thought that Lu Boyuan was comforting him, and he didn’t speak.

Lu Boyuan wore a natural expression on his face. “Since I haven’t been doted on by my boyfriend before, after all.”

“…” Jian Rong’s mouth went dry again because of that ‘*boyfriend*,’ and there was a long pause before he responded monotonously, “Oh.”

Lu Boyuan glanced at the tablet and said, “I finished watching the match. The mid laner is okay, but she’s still a bit worse compared to you in terms of laning.”

Jian Rong, who didn’t know how to write the word *‘modest*,’ nodded and said, “Of course. I’ve met her in ranked a few times before, she’s never beaten me.”

Lu Boyuan closed the app, revealing the Weibo interface, which was running in the background the entire time. The app was still frozen on a certain drawing that might be censored at any moment.

Jian Rong’s mind went blank, and he stiffly came to a halt, suddenly feeling somewhat at a loss.

He heard Lu Boyuan ask, “How come they never mention me?”

“They probably think that you won’t look at it…” Jian Rong stopped halfway through his reply.

In order to get the tablet, Jian Rong had bent over, and as long as he turned his head, he could meet Lu Boyuan’s eyes.

Lu Boyuan watched him. “You look at it every time?”

“Not every time…” Jian Rong reached out, wanting to exit the Weibo app. “Don’t look at it anymore.”

Lu Boyuan hummed. “I won’t.”

Before Jian Rong’s hand could touch the screen, Lu Boyuan tugged on his shirt collar. Then, he tilted his head and leaned in.

Whenever they first started kissing, Jian Rong was accustomed to keeping his eyes shut. But as they kissed for a longer period of time, he couldn’t help but slightly open his eyes.

Lu Boyuan had washed his hands after smoking, but when they kissed, Jian Rong could still smell a whiff of tobacco, faint and very enticing.

At the beginning, he just felt like it wasn’t very comfortable to be bending over. Later on, by the time Jian Rong pulled himself together, he was already lying down on Lu Boyuan’s bed. Lu Boyuan’s fingers were sunk deep into Jian Rong’s hair, and his breaths exhaled heavily against the tip of Jian Rong’s nose.

When the hem of his shirt was dragged up, Jian Rong swallowed uncontrollably. A burning sensation ignited everywhere that he was touched.

Jian Rong’s waist was still slender; who knows where the weight that he had gained all went.

In the end, Jian Rong was the first to give in. He arched up and whispered, “Wait, I want to go to the bathroom…”

Lu Boyuan pushed himself up slightly and leaned over Jian Rong, looking at him. “Do you want the bathroom, or do you want your boyfriend?”

That question completely nailed Jian Rong to the spot.

His pulse was thrumming too quickly, and he repeatedly licked his lips numerous times before he asked huskily, “How to have… my boyfriend?”

Lu Boyuan said, “Wasn’t it shown on the drawing?”

Lu Boyuan turned off his phone before he got up and walked towards the door.

The moment Jian Rong heard the lock flip, he couldn’t help but close his eyes as tingles raced all the way up his back to his head.

…

When they were kissing, his eyes were closed, so he couldn’t see anything. But later, he ended up witnessing everything clearly.

Lu Boyuan’s ears were also red, along with the outer corners of his eyes. Jian Rong didn’t know where to look, and whenever he accidentally met Lu Boyuan’s gaze, Lu Boyuan would lean in to kiss him.

The only remaining light in the room came from the dim bedside lamp. The late spring evening breeze seeped in through the cracked-open window, intermingling with the scalding chemistry in the room.

There was a mole on Jian Rong’s leg. Eyes cast downward, Lu Boyuan pressed against the mole with his other hand, rubbing that patch of skin

until it flushed pink.

…

Once the blankness faded and Jian Rong snapped out of it, he saw Lu Boyuan wiping his hands, head lowered.

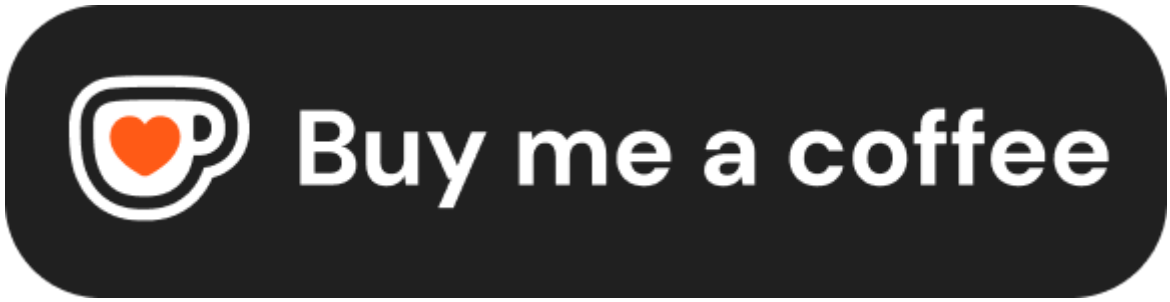
He sucked in a deep breath of air before he picked up Lu Boyuan's pillow and covered his face with it.

—

The author has something to say:

Only the hand.

Yan: Debated about whether to put a nsfw warning on these kinds of chapters – this is honestly about as explicit as it gets (gotta rely on your imagination lol) so please let me know if you think one is needed! For now, there's only two chapters I can think of where I'll probably slap one on (this not being one of them).



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ICDI Chapter 98: ?

Thank you so much to Ko-fi Supporter for the Ko-fi~

Lu Boyuan watched him hide his head like an ostrich and really felt the urge to laugh.

After he cleaned his hands off with a wet paper towel, he knelt on the bed and effortlessly tugged off the pillow.

Jian Rong's entire face was still red. He rubbed his eyes and then rubbed his face before he tried hard to act natural as he asked, "Does your hand feel tired."

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. He felt like if he said no, it would probably leave somewhat of a blow on the young man's self-confidence. "It's all right."

Jian Rong's hair was an absolute mess. He sat up and looked at his pants and underwear lying at the side of the bed, before he saw that Lu Boyuan was still fully dressed. Strictly speaking, the only difference was that his clothes were a little wrinkled now…

Finally, his gaze landed on Lu Boyuan's slender fingers.

The instant he remembered what those hands were doing just a moment ago and the way those fingers had been curled, Jian Rong felt his heart tingle as one thought took over his entire mind—

What the hell kind of things have I used the world champion's hands for!!!

He drew in a deep breath of air before he hastily pulled on his underwear and reached for his pants.

"Your pants are dirty." Lu Boyuan reminded him considerately.

Jian Rong: "…"

Lu Boyuan asked, "Wear mine? I'll get a clean pair for you."

Jian Rong recalled how he still needed to wash some things off his legs, and he immediately shook his head. "It's not that bad… my room is just a few steps over."

In the end, carrying his own pants, Jian Rong carefully pulled open Lu Boyuan's door like a thief. He poked his head out and peered to the left and right, wanting to confirm if there was anyone else nearby.

He truly was scarred by the people in the base who could pop out at any given moment.

Lu Boyuan crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the wall, watching him from behind. He let out a soft chuckle.

Jian Rong looked back. "Why're you laughing?"

"The way you're acting…" Lu Boyuan glanced at the pants Jian Rong was holding and the long legs extending out from underneath his clothing. "Makes me think we just finished having a secret love affair."

Jian Rong: "…"

Lu Boyuan's original intention was just to tease him a little. Unexpectedly, Jian Rong froze for two seconds before he turned around, still carrying his pants, and kissed Lu Boyuan on the corner of his mouth.

"I'm going back now." Even though his face was clearly bright red, Jian Rong insisted on purposefully assuming a very cool expression. "Boyfriend."

After he left, Lu Boyuan continued to lean against the wall for quite a while before he moved at last.

His bed was a bit messy. The bed sheets that the auntie had newly changed out for him were black, so when Jian Rong was lying on it just now, the color contrast was extremely distinct. His thin, pale waist nestled among the bedding—a glimpse of it alone was dazzling.

Lu Boyuan remembered how earlier, Jian Rong had fumbled a hand towards him using what brainpower still remained, eyes half-closed, wanting to help Lu Boyuan out too. Before he could touch him, Lu Boyuan had gripped his wrist and pressed it back down.

Lu Boyuan understood himself relatively well, so he knew that his self-control truly wasn't very good when it came to this sort of thing. It was fine if he held himself back, but the moment the lid was opened…

A long pause later, Lu Boyuan randomly chose some clothing and went into the bathroom.

Shanghai had now entered late spring. This month, the temperature rose sharply once again, and there were even two days when it hit 28 degrees Celsius.

The weather wasn't yet at the point where they had no choice but to turn on the air conditioning. However, people had already started setting up their own electric fans next to their computers in the base.

In their practice match that afternoon, WZWZ's support complained in the all chat about how their base's air conditioning was broken and that it was affecting their training. Xiao Bai replied with a string of ellipses, and he finally couldn't resist asking the question that he had been confused about for the past few days.

"Big bro, back when Shanghai's temperature was in the tens, you were playing ranked in short-sleeves without even giving a single shiver. These days, Shanghai is about to hit thirty degrees…" Xiao Bai glanced down at Jian Rong's pants. "So how come you're constantly wearing long pants?"

Because the finger marks still hadn't faded.

Jian Rong was also puzzled. He always thought that he was fairly thick-skinned and sturdy, but after simply being kneaded a few times, he could still faintly see markings on certain parts of his calves, even after two days had passed.

Actually, it didn't matter if there were marks, since they were very faint. Unless you looked closely, you couldn't even see them. Even if someone spotted them, he could explain them away as mosquito bites.

But he just had a guilty conscience.

Upon hearing that, Lu Boyuan tilted his head and shot a look at Jian Rong's pants.

Jian Rong sensed his gaze and couldn't help but press his lips together. "… don't stick your nose in your teammate's life."

"I'm trying to look out for myself here." Xiao Bai said righteously, "It's been too hot lately, and I wanted to convince Ding-*ge* to turn on the air conditioning, but if he sees the way you're dressed, he definitely won't agree."

Jian Rong replied very mercilessly, "Then stay hot."

Right after the practice match ended, someone pushed open the door to their room.

Ding-*ge* walked in with his little notebook and cut straight to the point. "The consequences from the streaming incident with Rish have been announced."

Jian Rong immediately asked, "Was he penalized?"

Ding-*ge* said, "No."

Jian Rong's expression swiftly cooled, and he didn't say anything else.

"He started mocking them first, so why wasn't he penalized?" Xiao Bai closed the scoreboard from the practice match and questioned, "Then what kind of penalty did they give to our mid laner and jungler?"

Ding-*ge* said, "We weren't fined either."

Yuan Qian frowned. "So nobody was fined? What consequences are there to be announced then? There just wasn't any punishment at all."

"There was." Ding-*ge* cleared this throat. "Doufu was fined 20,000."

Xiao Bai: "?"

"10,000 was for using profanity on stream… the other 10,000 was for verbally attacking our team's mid laner Soft."

Jian Rong: "…"

Everyone went quiet for two seconds before bursting into laughter.

Especially Xiao Bai, who was laughing so hard that there were tears in his eyes. "Damn hahaha serves him right! No way, I gotta go to his stream and see what his expression is right now hahahaha."

"Enough with you, behave yourself a little." Ding-*ge* knocked his head.

Upon learning that Lu Boyuan hadn't been fined, Jian Rong let out a sigh of relief, and even his movements when exiting out of the game were somewhat smoother.

"There's something else," Ding-*ge* said. "The quarterfinals are being held at our team's home stadium tomorrow, Fighting Tiger versus MFG. I can get my hands on floor seat tickets, do you guys want to watch in person? After we're done, I'll take you all out to eat too."

Because of the single elimination bracket system, the competition schedule for the playoffs developed extremely quickly, as every BO5 match would eliminate one team. After a few days of the playoffs, only the last two teams remained underneath TTC's bracket: Fighting Tiger and MFG.

Between those two, the team that won would directly face off against TTC in the semifinals, and the winner of that match would be allowed to participate in the Spring Split finals.

Ever since the regular season ended, nobody had left the base. Apart from when they slept, almost all their other free time was spent stuck in practice matches or ranked. When Ding-*ge* said that, everyone instantly grew excited.

"Yes!" Xiao Bai's eyes lit up. "Can I pick the restaurant?"

"You can't. Don't think I forgot how you picked that rotten buffet last time, which cost 1,599 *yuan* per person." Ding-*ge* asked, "So everyone's going, right? Then I'll ask a staff member to get the tickets?"

Pine said indifferently, "Mn."

"Is it possible to get an extra ticket?" Yuan Qian asked, "I want to take Youyou along too."

"No problem, as if we should have any problems getting tickets for our own stadium?" Ding-*ge* glanced at their silent mid laner and jungler. "Are the two of you coming?"

Jian Rong actually wasn't really fond of watching competitions in person, since the surroundings were too noisy and they also had to tilt their heads back to watch the big screen. If the seats were too far away, they wouldn't even be able to see what was going on with both teams' skills.

Lu Boyuan unplugged his mouse and said, "I'm good with anything."

Jian Rong paused for a moment. "Yes."

As they were walking out of the practice match room, Lu Boyuan seemed to remember something, and he turned to ask Ding-*ge*, "What's the situation in the LCK right now?"

"HT is leading the pack. Their competition schedule is set later than ours, so they don't know who they're playing against in the semifinals yet." Ding-*ge* lowered his voice. "However, I think they have a fairly good chance of winning at finals. If nothing goes wrong, they're most likely going to be at MSI."

Lu Boyuan gave an "*en*" and stopped walking.

Ding-*ge* stopped as well, confused. "What is it?"

"You go ahead."

Following Lu Boyuan's line of sight, Ding-*ge* glanced behind him just in time to see their mid laner walk out of the room, carrying his keyboard.

Ding-*ge*: "…"

Is this a freaking primary school relationship? After getting out of class, you still have to wait for the other person?

The next afternoon, TTC's members prepared to go watch the match.

Because they were going as spectators, Ding-*ge* instructed them to dress as low-key as possible, so they wouldn't cause any disturbances.

A short while later, their mid laner got in the car, wearing the white T-shirt and jeans combo that typical eighteen-year-old guys liked to wear, along with their jungler's merch hat on his head.

Ding-*ge* asked with a smile, "This is MFG and Fighting Tiger's match, whose party are you trying to crash by wearing our team's merch there?"

"I only have two hats. This is one of them, the other is my own merch hat." Jian Rong pinched the hat's brim. "Maybe I just shouldn't wear it?"

Ding-*ge* looked at the two tufts of blue hair that were faintly sticking out and shut his mouth.

Two minutes later, their jungler got in the car, wearing the black T-shirt and jeans combo that typical twenty-three-year-old guys liked to wear, along with their mid laner's merch hat on his head.

Ding-*ge*: "What? Do you also only have two hats?!"

"I only have this one." Lu Boyuan said mildly, "I forgot to get the new merch, and I brought the rest home last time."

Ding-*ge*: "…"

In the end, Ding-*ge* told the driver to start driving as he prevented Xiao Bai from getting out of the car and grabbing his own merch hat in an attempt to market it at the stadium.

Reality proved that Ding-*ge* was truly overthinking things—forget their baseball caps, even if they had come wearing large cotton-padded jackets and trapper hats, they still would've been recognized instantly by the broadcast directors.

After entering the stadium, they had just barely settled into their seats when the camera connected to the big screen focused on Yuan Qian and Ding-*ge*. Youyou, who was sitting next to Yuan Qian, was also half-captured in the shot.

The fans in the arena were stunned at first before they all started screaming. There were even some people who couldn't resist standing up and peering in their direction.

"We can see that TTC's members have also arrived at the stadium." Commentator A joked, "Are they here to pick their opponent for the semifinals?"

Commentator B smiled. "Don't stir up rumors, TTC's manager has already gone through enough this season."

Afterwards, the camera moved over to Xiao Bai and Pine. Xiao Bai immediately lifted his hand and created half a heart, before he knocked Pine with his shoulder, indicating that he should cooperate.

Pine expressionlessly pushed Xiao Bai's hand back down against the seat.

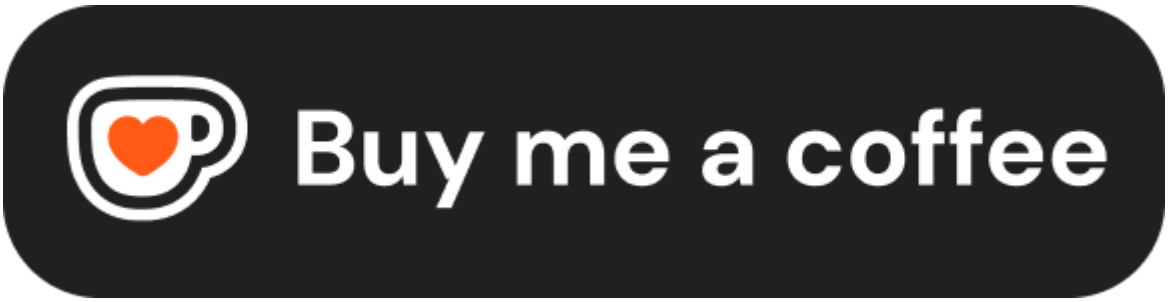
Finally, the camera slowly shifted to the right again.

Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan entered the shot. The camera panned from the top of their heads downwards; both of their hats were pulled very low, so their expressions weren't visible from that angle.

"As expected, God Lu and Soft are also here… wait a moment." Commentator A paused. "Are they both wearing the wrong person's hat?"

Commentator B: "Hm? But I remember during the last World Championship finals, it seemed like Soft was also wearing God Lu's merch hat?"

"Then is this God Lu's response?" With a benevolent expression and the smile of a straight man on his face, Commentator C asked, "Soft got with his idol?"



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ICDI Chapter 99: My partner is managing my WeChat.

After the commentator said that, the stadium went quiet for approximately two seconds.

Then the fans holding up Fighting Tiger and MFG signs brought their hands up to their mouths and started shouting—

“It’s real! He got with him! I’ve seen the drawings!”

“Kiss, kiss!”

A piercing female voice stood out above the rest. “Soft give me some of your luck I also want to get with my idol—”

“…”

Jian Rong lifted his head and coldly looked up.

Commentator A said to the person sitting in the middle, “Are you allowed to say that?! Little B, go cover his mouth!”

Commentator C: “Ah that’s not it, I was just joking, joking. Also, they’re both guys, how…”

“Enough, enough, TTC’s manager really can’t handle much more.” Commentator B coughed lightly before changing the topic. “Our match is about to begin as well. Oh right, where are the Spring Split finals being held this year again?”

Commentator A instantly played along. “The Mountain City, Chongqing!”

Ding-*ge* really wanted to beat someone up, but he couldn’t figure out whether he should be beating up Little C or his own team’s mid laner and jungler, who were the ones actually involved in the workplace romance. Afraid that the broadcast director was going to cause trouble and turn the camera on him, Ding-*ge* lifted the corners of his mouth, doing his best to put on a fake smile.

In reality, Jian Rong wasn’t intending to make a face, except his lips were drawn tightly together. That, in combination with how his image usually wasn’t very good, gave off the impression that he was quite displeased.

He had raised his head because he wanted to glance at the big screen.

When he saw himself and Lu Boyuan on the screen, for a brief moment, Jian Rong felt as if he had returned to last year’s Worlds finals.

However, back then, he was merely a passerby who had accidentally entered the frame. He had sat next to TTC, listening to them discuss where to eat after the finals were over, which BBQ skewer place to go to…

At the time, Lu Boyuan also probably couldn’t have imagined that the person sitting next to him had watched him compete for several years, that he had drunk the milk Lu Boyuan had handed him before, and that he had nearly sold the entrance ticket that Lu Boyuan had given him.

The camera finally went back to the commentators. The three professional commentators quickly returned to the main topic and started analyzing the

previous team compositions and scores that the director had provided them for the two competing teams today.

Not wanting to reveal anything, Jian Rong ducked his head and tugged the brim of his hat down a little further. Then, he stealthily shot a glance to his side.

It was hot outside, and the air conditioning in the arena was somewhat weak, so they had tugged their masks underneath their chins immediately upon entering the stadium.

Lu Boyuan was in the middle of replying to some WeChat messages. His eyes were half-lidded, and the bridge of his nose was tall and straight. Most likely because this wasn't his own match, he wore a fairly lazy expression.

Right as Jian Rong looked over, Lu Boyuan locked his phone and tilted his head towards him, lifting his chin slightly to reveal his eyes.

There was a faint smile hidden in his gaze. "Do you want me to help you clear things up?"

Jian Rong was startled. "Clear what up?"

"Clear up," Lu Boyuan said lowly, "that I was the one who got with my fan first."

Jian Rong: "……"

Jian Rong nearly got killed by that word "got[1]."

Xiao Bai, sitting to the side, was both watching the show and adding fuel to the fire. Not only had he jeered and howled a few times along with the audience earlier, now he had even pulled up the live broadcast on his phone to check out the barrage.

Oblivious to the ambiguous aura enveloping the two people next to him, Xiao Bai held up his phone as he said delightedly, "Hahahahaha, they're all spamming things like '*welcome to the wedding ceremony for TTC's mid laner and jungler*' in the stream's barrage…"

Before he could finish his sentence, someone rapped him on the back of his head.

Xiao Bai turned to stare straight at Pine.

Pine: "Watch what you're saying, there are people filming us from behind."

Xiao Bai covered his head and said, shocked, "You hit me."

"…"

"You couldn't even bear to raise your voice against me before, but now that more time has passed—"

"Shut up." Pine coldly cut off Xiao Bai's performance. "I didn't use any force."

Five minutes later, MFG and Fighting Tiger officially entered the stage. Jian Rong glanced at the people on stage; that female player was still the starter for MFG today as well.

During the first match of the playoffs, MFG's starting mid laner Kongkong had played averagely, which gave this substitute female player many opportunities.

The five old brothers in Fighting Tiger seemed to have gained quite a bit of weight again during the regular season, and there was a stark contrast between them and the little sticks on MFG. Especially that female mid laner —perhaps due to the pressure, she had lost weight, causing her facial features to sharpen considerably.

But that was to be expected. In and of itself, substitute players didn't have many chances to become starters. As long as they didn't perform well in one game, it was very likely that they would end up going back to continue watching the water cooler.

Commentator A: "Like before, MFG is sending out their female general, Jm, today."

"Jm's in a good condition. Her performance has been outstanding in the last few matches, so it's normal for them to swap her in." The camera focused on Jm. Upon seeing her fair and clear face, Commentator B laughed and said, "Sure enough, nineteen-year-old girls just have bright and healthy skin. On the stage, she's like a single flower amidst ten thousand blades of grass."

"I have a vague impression of this female pro player, I think her ID was Jmroad on the Ionia server before? She later changed it to the team ID after joining MFG." Commentator C chuckled mischievously. "It seems like Jm is also God Lu's fan, hm? But that's not unusual. After all, he's the top jungler

daddy in the LPL. It just so happens that God Lu is also here today, maybe they could exchange contact information or something after the match…"

Lu Boyuan instinctively looked at Jian Rong.

As expected, the teenager had propped his chin up on one hand and was currently staring at Commentator C's back.

Lu Boyuan laughed in spite of himself and leaned in a little towards Jian Rong. "Who do you think will win?"

Jian Rong withdrew his gaze. The players on the stage were in the middle of adjusting their peripherals and hadn't entered the pick/ban phase yet. "Disregarding team comps… Fighting Tiger is a bit more likely to win."

Although MFG's teamwork had been remarkable after switching in a new mid laner, allowing them to rise all the way from fourth to last in the regular season to the quarterfinals, the strength and cooperation of an old veteran team like Fighting Tiger was also displayed right there in front of them.

Facing off against a team who was weaker than them as a whole, it was very hard for things to go wrong for Fighting Tiger, especially since this was a BO5 game, which tested the players' endurance.

Lu Boyuan saw that Jian Rong's lips were pursed, and he asked, "You want to play against Fighting Tiger again?"

Jian Rong nodded without hesitation. "Mn."

After the previous regular season match with his stifling solo-player Fizz, Jian Rong practiced Fizz for a very long time. Later, he also solo killed Fighting Tiger's mid laner Da Niu numerous times using Fizz during their practice matches—

But everyone knew that Fighting Tiger's condition during a practice match was completely different from their condition during a competitive match. Even if he solo killed Da Niu eight or ten times in a practice match, it didn't mean much.

Jian Rong harbored grudges and didn't like to admit defeat. Wherever he fell down, that was where he wanted to crawl back up from.

The match swiftly entered the pick/ban phase. The team compositions for both sides were revealed, and they were filled with mid- to late-game champions.

Ding-*ge* was watching the screen closely. He wrote down the pick/ban choices for both teams in his notebook before he subconsciously turned his head and asked, "What are your thoughts on that female player?"

Lu Boyuan: "?"

"I've been watching game recordings these past few days, her Orianna and Taliyah are both pretty good. Most importantly, she's great at being a protective mid laner and can play both Lulu and Karma. Is this the superiority of female players?" Ding-*ge* sighed. "I'm a little regretful that we didn't recruit her into the team back then and make her a sub. Maybe then we could've tried out a four-protect-one strategy. You take Kindred, Yuan

Qian takes Shen, and then we pick Leona or something along those lines for support. Wouldn't Pine just directly soar into the sky…"

Jian Rong: "I can also play Lulu and Karma."

"Like hell you can." Xiao Bai promptly said, "Last time when you clicked on the wrong champion and picked Lulu mid in ranked, just how many shields did P-baby get while he was duo queuing with you that game…"

Pine replied emotionlessly, "Forty-seven minutes and fifty-one seconds, three shields."

Xiao Bai heaved a sigh. "Poor, poor P-baby."

"…it's been so long since you left your hometown to come to Shanghai." Jian Rong turned to ask Xiao Bai, "Have you ever eaten a Shanghai fist before?"

Xiao Bai was already used to his threats. He was about to reply when he suddenly saw his *ge*'s hand reach out and land on Jian Rong's hat, effortlessly rotating their displeased mid laner back around.

The BO5 match soon began.

In the first round, MFG still had many good plays in the early game. Their bot lane had seventeen more minion kills than Fighting Tiger's, and the mid laner nearly solo killed Da Niu.

Jian Rong looked at Da Niu on the big screen, who was calmly recalling to base, and blurted out, "He seems unbothered."

Lu Boyuan hummed. “She appeared to have almost gotten the kill, but in reality, when Da Niu chose to push the lane and wave clear, he had already calculated out that she wouldn’t have enough damage to kill him.”

However, it didn’t matter if she didn’t kill him. Restricting Da Niu’s farming was also good.

Just as everyone was thinking that MFG had a chance of winning this game, during a drake team fight twenty minutes in, Fighting Tiger’s top laner transformed his Gnar and directly smashed MFG’s top and bot laners into the wall. Da Niu’s Neeko quickly followed up and plummeted down from above, stunning the three MFG members, before the ADC’s Aphelios dealt out explosive damage—

That perfectly played team fight reversed the tide. MFG was suppressed to the point that those three players couldn’t even use their ults before their screens instantly went gray.

In the end, Fighting Tiger killed four of MFG’s players and captured their second drake.

“MFG is done for this round.” Ding-*ge* stared at the match broadcast. “Since the start of the spring season until now, Fighting Tiger has never lost a single match in which they’ve been able to get two drakes.”

Sure enough, after that team fight, Fighting Tiger resumed control of the game.

They started snowballing bit by bit. By the time Jian Rong lifted his head again to check how much gold both teams had, Fighting Tiger was already

leading MFG by 7,000.

Thirty-eight minutes in, Da Niu, who was restrained in the early game, solo killed the other mid laner. All of Fighting Tiger headed straight for MFG's base and won the first round of the match.

In the second game, MFG still sent out their substitute mid laner. This time in the pick/bane phase, Jm got the champion she was best at: Orianna.

From his peripheral vision, Lu Boyuan noticed that his team's mid laner was frowning, so he asked curiously, "How's her Orianna pick?"

"Fighting Tiger has never made a mistake in their pick/ban phase before." Jian Rong fell silent briefly before he said, "She wasn't the one who chose Orianna, Fighting Tiger is purposefully giving it to her."

Right after Jian Rong said that, Da Niu chose Syndra, who was extremely good at suppressing Orianna in the early game.

Despite being the oldest pro player in the LPL, Da Niu continued to maintain the strength level that a pro player should have, even though the peak of his career had already passed. He could play early, mid, or late game, a true all-around mid laner.

Coupled with the flawless tacit understanding and teamwork he had with his team's jungler, in less than fifteen minutes, Orianna's score was already at a pitiful 0/3/0. Though she was a champion that needed to farm, by mid game, she didn't even dare to cross the river to clear minions or push towers.

This round finished even faster than expected. Twenty-eight minutes in, Fighting Tiger flattened MFG's base.

In the third game, MFG finally switched in their starting mid laner, Kongkong.

Unfortunately, it was still no use—the issue with the last two games came from the team as a whole, not only the mid laner.

Thirty minutes later, Fighting Tiger simply and efficiently won the entire match with a score of 3:0, officially becoming TTC's opponent for the semifinals.

After watching the post-match interview, TTC stood up to leave the arena.

Because they had been discovered by the fans and were worried about causing a disturbance, a staff member specially came up and invited them backstage to take the personnel elevator, which could take them straight to the parking lot below.

"Fuck, on average those guys are all over twenty-five, how can they still improve so much?!" Ding-*ge* hit the elevator button. "Especially Da Niu, I originally thought that he was gonna retire last year…"

"Should be soon." Yuan Qian held Youyou's bag for her and said, "No matter how powerful you are, your body still can't handle it. I heard that their top laner, mid laner, and jungler all have very serious back injuries."

The moment he said that, a hand stopped the elevator door from closing completely.

Jian Rong raised his head and saw the disappointed-looking MFG members.

Both teams were startled.

Jian Rong's gaze subconsciously went to MFG's female mid laner, Jm. Jm's hair was a bit messy, and she hadn't taken the time to tidy it up. Even though her face was mostly expressionless, her eyes were bright red. There was a watery sheen to them, most likely due to crying, and it gave her a wronged appearance; anyone who saw her couldn't help but want to comfort her a little.

As a result, Commentator C, who just got off work and was walking past MFG from behind, stopped in place and put on his same asking-for-a-beating smile from the match. "This elevator can fit fifteen people, go in go in—hey, Jm, don't you like God Lu? This is perfect, you can ask God Lu for his WeChat or something…"

Immediately, MFG's top laner suddenly moved from where he was standing in front of her to cover her completely.

Simultaneously, Lu Boyuan felt the person next to him freeze for a second before turning sideways to stare outside the transparent glass of the elevator.

"I'll pass."

"That's not really necessary…"

Jm and Lu Boyuan spoke at the same time.

Jm rubbed her eyes and said extremely calmly, “He was my idol before, but now he’s my competitor.”

Thinking that she was just embarrassed, Commentator C laughed. “That’s no problem, it’s normal for pro players to add each other as friends! And plus, you can chat about things outside of competitions!”

Jian Rong sucked in a deep breath of air. He really wanted to ask if this man’s main job was being a matchmaker and commentating was just his side gig.

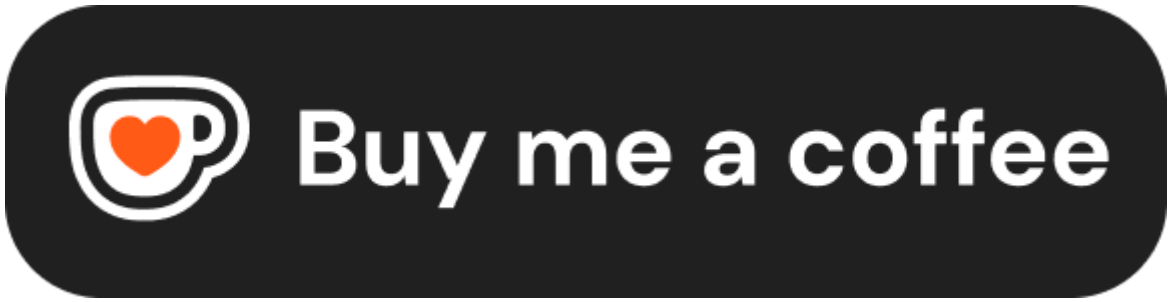
Jm hesitated and probably thought that there was no harm in merely adding each other as friends. She lifted her head and shot a questioning look at Lu Boyuan.

“No thanks, I’m good. It’s not very convenient, my partner is managing my WeChat.”

After Lu Boyuan said that, he smiled at her in front of everyone’s dumbstruck gazes. “You play pretty well, I look forward to meeting you on stage next time.”

Translation Notes

1. *My last brain cell failed me here – technically the word they’ve been using this whole time when talking about “getting with” their idol is 搞 (gao). Gao is the equivalent of ‘do’ in the sense that you can use it perfectly normally or in a euphemistic way. Here, LBY is lowkey making a dirty joke with it* ^



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ICDI Chapter 100: Wasn’t I being quite stingy back then?

Thank you so much to Aimee for the Ko-fi!!

In the end, MFG didn’t get in the elevator.

Each with their own thoughts occupying their minds, everyone in the elevator glanced up at the surveillance camera before they silently returned to the car.

The instant the car door closed, the entire team turned to look at the backseat.

Xiao Bai currently looked just like one of those hardcore paparazzi fans. “*Ge*, you have a partner now? Since when? Who is it? Do I know her? Isn’t this way too sudden, I haven’t even mentally prepared myself yet—what kind of person is my sister-in-law, a host, a streamer, a female celebrity???”

He paused. “Or is she a super rich young lady from some wealthy family that your parents introduced you to?!”

Lu Boyuan’s arm was propped against the windowsill, supporting his face. Upon hearing that, he looked up from his phone and glanced at the person sitting next to him.

The others subconsciously followed his line of sight and also peered over.

Their mid laner was staring outside the window, one hand pressed down on the brim of his hat. Though he sensed the gazes, he didn't bother lifting his head.

Lu Boyuan only cast a quick look at him before he averted his gaze. He said, "None of the above."

Yuan Qian noticed something and asked, "Is it not convenient to say who?"

Xiao Bai received a flash of inspiration. "It can't be that it's be our team's—"

Jian Rong and Ding-*ge*, who was sitting in the first row, simultaneously coughed a few times.

Xiao Bai finished his sentence. "Staff member, right?"

Jian Rong: "…"

"Enough with that, what's the point of gossiping so much? We're driving, hurry up and sit properly!" Ding-*ge* was also given quite a scare, and he turned his head to say, "The semifinals are in four days, use your energy for gossiping to figure out how to beat Fighting Tiger."

Xiao Bai said innocently, "Aren't I just concerned for my *ge*? Despite his age, my *ge*'s never dated anyone, so I'm worried about him being led on."

Pine swept a look at him and asked, "You've been led on before?"

"Nope, I've been single since birth, it's not like you don't know that." Xiao Bai heaved a sigh. "However, a few days ago, there was this female streamer

who got involved with a scummy person. Her partner ended up exposing a bunch of her photos and chat records, how awful…"

"Your *ge* won't be led on." Ding-*ge* said irritably, "Shut up."

Originally, they planned to have dinner while they were out, but Fu-*ge* ended up calling last minute to tell them about a privately-owned restaurant that his friend had just opened. He had asked his friend to pack up some dinner for them and had sent it to the base.

As a result, they changed destinations halfway and returned to the base.

Now that their opponent for the semifinals was determined, needless to say, tonight they were naturally going to review the recording from the earlier quarterfinals match.

"I genuinely don't like competing against Fighting Tiger," Xiao Bai complained as he watched the TV. "Every time, it feels like I'm punching cotton, or like I'm a frog being boiled alive. We're fighting and fighting and then we're suddenly losing for some reason."

Lu Boyuan leaned back against the couch. "There's no helping it, they're already past the peak of their careers. If they could gain an advantage while laning, nobody would want to drag it out to the late game."

Yuan Qian took a sip of his soup and lamented, "I still miss the way they used to play more."

Jian Rong was listening to their conversation absent-mindedly for a while. Upon hearing that, he asked, "How did they used to play?"

“It was just like their team name.” Lu Boyuan said, “Before in the LPL, if there wasn’t a kill in the first five minutes of the game, the barrage would flame the teams for being trash.”

That reminded Xiao Bai of something, and he said to Jian Rong, “That’s why I said you joined the industry late. With your playstyle, if this were five years earlier… no, maybe three years earlier, you would’ve definitely been a star pro gamer. Back then, the LPL wasn’t copying things from the Korean league yet, so the fights were totally dependent on your on-the-spot performance.”

Yuan Qian’s head was lowered as he replied to a text. Since they were eating, he didn’t feel like putting in earphones, so when he received a voice message, he decided to just directly play it out loud—

“Qian-*ge*, it’s Shiliu. I wanted to ask, is Xiao Rong with you right now? I sent him quite a few texts, but he didn’t answer. Nothing happened to him, right?”

From the beginning of Fighting Tiger’s match until now, Jian Rong hadn’t checked his phone once. When he pulled it out, he found that he had indeed received many voice messages from Shiliu. He converted all the voice messages into written text, and while he was waiting for the conversion process to finish, he replied with an “*I’m here*.”

Shiliu immediately called him via WeChat.

Not wanting to disturb the others as they watched the recording, Jian Rong went out onto the balcony with his phone.

“I was gonna ask if you wanted to duo queue together, and I also wanted to see if you were free anytime soon. I’m planning to visit Shanghai for a few days in the near future… but you’re about to play in the semifinals, right? This crappy brain of mine.” Shiliu chuckled, his voice sounding a little distant. “I just feel like it’s been a long time since I’ve talked to you.”

Jian Rong stood in the night breeze. “Last time when I invited you to duo queue, you didn’t accept.”

“I know, I was eating at the time, so I didn’t see it.” Shiliu paused. “And after that, it wasn’t really appropriate if I invited you again either.”

Back when Jian Rong was still a popular streamer, Shiliu was often the target of ridicule claiming that he was hugging Jian Rong’s thigh and mooching off of his popularity. Now that Jian Rong was a pro gamer, if Shiliu invited him to play together again, he would probably be flamed even worse.

“There isn’t anything appropriate or inappropriate about it. I’ve been playing on the Korean server recently, so if you want to duo queue together, then just message me on WeChat. I’ll create a side account and play with you on the Chinese server.”

“Thanks, bro.” Shiliu said, “I checked the ticket prices, I can come cheer you on in person for the semifinals, how’s that sound?”

Jian Rong said, “Anything’s fine. If you really want to come, you don’t need to buy an admission ticket, I should have some free ones here…”

Sensing something, Jian Rong turned his head, still holding his phone.

Lu Boyuan was leaning lazily against the wall next to the door, arms crossed over his chest and a smile on his lips. Jian Rong didn't know how long he had been standing there for.

The little scalper had turned the tables and become the ticket provider; now, he could even give other people tickets for free.

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow, indicating for him to continue.

Shiliu didn't hold back. "OK, then I'll contact you once I'm in Shanghai."

"Alright." Jian Rong said, "I'm gonna hang up now, I have… to take care of something here."

"Also." Shiliu checked the date. "Your parents' death anniversary is coming up soon, right? Aren't your spring season finals in Chongqing? Will you make it back in time? I could go visit them for you instead."

"It's fine, I'll be back." Jian Rong lowered his eyes. "I'll go visit them myself."

After he hung up, Lu Boyuan walked over to him. "Was that the streamer who went to watch the Worlds finals with you last year?"

"Mn." Jian Rong paused for a second. "A friend from my streaming days."

When he didn't receive a response, Jian Rong turned to look at Lu Boyuan. "Why are you smiling?"

Lu Boyuan said, "No reason, I don't think I've ever heard you talk about a friend before."

Jian Rong went briefly quiet before he withdrew his gaze and stared out towards the sea of lights in the distance. “I don’t really have any friends.”

The balcony light was off. Lu Boyuan cast his eyes down, looking at Jian Rong’s thick, delicate eyelashes. “Aren’t there often livestream events, so that streamers can do things like form teams and PK each other over voice chat? You didn’t get to know some fellow streamers?”

“Back when I wasn’t popular yet, I would go to generate some popularity and cheat out gifts. After I got an audience, I stopped going.” Jian Rong remembered something and furrowed his brows unhappily. “Some streamers had super disgusting PK punishments…”

Before he could finish his sentence, someone ruffled his hair. Lu Boyuan said leisurely, “Like dyeing your hair?”

Jian Rong shook his head lightly. “That’s not too bad. Some of them would make the losers bark like dogs or eat an entire jar of chili peppers… once, I encountered a dumbass who proposed a rule that the loser had to find a female accompanying gamer to play with. They would have to stream themselves tricking her contact info out of her, and then they would have to go see what she really looked like on her QQ profile.”

This was unfamiliar territory for Lu Boyuan. He frowned. “Then what happened.”

“Then I flamed him for half an hour.” Jian Rong recalled, “At the time, if you started a PK, you would be punished for backing out, so he couldn’t leave.”

Lu Boyuan burst into laughter.

Jian Rong should've only been fifteen or sixteen years old back when he still hadn't gained popularity yet as a streamer, and already, he was able to trap someone in their livestream room and insult them for half an hour…

"I've added a lot of streamers on WeChat, but I don't talk to any of them, so they can't be considered friends." Jian Rong listed out, "Also… I wasn't friends with any of my classmates, and I wasn't very close to my neighbors either."

Lu Boyuan nodded. "Then who were you just talking about visiting?"

Jian Rong said calmly, "My parents."

"Are they in Shanghai?" Lu Boyuan said. "I'll drive you there."

Jian Rong shook his head. "No need, I can go by myself."

Lu Boyuan thought that Jian Rong was worried about their relationship being discovered by his parents. "I can park my car a bit further away."

"That's not it." Jian Rong pressed his lips together. "Soon, it'll be the anniversary of their death."

A momentary silence descended over the balcony. Faintly, Xiao Bai's voice could still be heard from within the base.

Lu Boyuan was slightly stunned. A long pause later, he finally said, "When did it happen?"

Lu Boyuan waited quietly for a while, but he still ended up feeling like he had asked too early. He said, "It's fine if you don't want to say it…"

“It’s not that I don’t want to say it.” Jian Rong licked his lips and ducked his head to stare at the plants in the garden below. Another few seconds passed before he said, “When I was ten.”

His voice was somewhat low, and it smashed gently into Lu Boyuan’s heart.

“They passed away in a car crash, and the driver responsible for the accident also died. Their family was extremely poor, so they couldn’t pay much in compensation.”

It had been too long since he last talked about this with someone, so Jian Rong was a little all over the place. “After that… I went to live with my grandpa. Grandpa already wasn’t in good health, and it worsened after my parents’ accident. A few years later, he got kidney disease, and in the end, he had to get dialysis treatments every week. He hung on for a little over two years.”

He omitted all the details and finished describing his childhood in a few succinct sentences.

Lu Boyuan drew in a deep breath of air almost imperceptibly.

He knew that Jian Rong had a difficult family situation in the past, but he hadn’t expected for it to be this bad.

He said hoarsely, “Then back when I saw you at the internet cafe…”

“My grandpa was just diagnosed with kidney disease.” Jian Rong felt like he had made the atmosphere too heavy, and he tugged up the corners of his lips. “I wasn’t trying to voluntarily become a scalper.”

After he said that, he didn't receive a response for a long time, and Jian Rong tousled his hair. Just as he was thinking that maybe he had said a bit too much, Lu Boyuan embraced him.

Lu Boyuan was much taller and broader than he was, and the fabric across his shoulders gave off the faint scent of laundry detergent.

Jian Rong was dumbfounded for quite a while before he finally reached out and grabbed onto Lu Boyuan's shirt. "I'm fine, really. It was a long time ago."

"Mn." Lu Boyuan's voice was low, and it blended into the night. "Let me hold you for a bit."

Jian Rong could sense Lu Boyuan's chest vibrating when he spoke. His heartbeat was somewhat fast.

Jian Rong didn't like being too close to other people; it made him feel uncomfortable and uneasy.

But it felt very good to be hugged by Lu Boyuan.

A long time later, Lu Boyuan suddenly asked, "Wasn't I being quite stingy back then?"

Jian Rong: "What?"

"I only bought you one carton of milk."

"…"

Jian Rong always thought that he had already overcome all that.

His family passing away, being chased out of businesses for being underage, rejecting the offer for an esports club tryout in order to save money for his grandpa's dialysis treatments, attracting perverts instead of viewers at the beginning of his streaming career… during the past two years, he had already reached the point where he could remember those things without it affecting him whatsoever.

But with one simple comment from Lu Boyuan, an indescribable feeling of being wronged surged straight to the surface.

Jian Rong slowly lowered his head and buried it against Lu Boyuan's shoulder. He said in a muffled voice, "You didn't have much money then either.

"When you were leaving the internet cafe, your money wasn't completely stuffed away. I saw it all, you had one five and two ones."

Lu Boyuan: "…"

"It's true that I didn't have much money at the time. I was only given 5,000 *yuan* from the total LSPL prize pool."

Jian Rong frowned. "Fu-*ge* is so rich and he still deducted from your prize money?"

"The team was in a rough spot back then, it had to resolve the issues of rent and fast internet. Our dorm internet was too terrible, and we frequently

disconnected during practice matches." Lu Boyuan paused. "All the other teams kept thinking that we were super trash, until the LSPL kicked off…"

Jian Rong was very fond of listening to stories from Lu Boyuan's earlier competition days.

He asked, "What champion were you playing in that account-sealing competition that you ended up losing?"

"…Jarvan." Lu Boyuan mussed up his hair. "You still can't get over that?"

Both of their phones chimed at the same time.

Lu Boyuan released Jian Rong and pulled out his phone. It was a message from Ding-*ge* in their group chat, urging them to go upstairs and practice.

At the end of the message were three huge exclamation marks, like a warning or a roar that could hold itself back no longer.

"Ding-*ge*'s calling us." Jian Rong's heart was still beating somewhat fast as he thought of something. "Oh right, why did you suddenly tell them… that you have a partner."

"If I didn't say it then, my partner was going to crack the glass of the elevator with his glare."

"…"

"Just joking." Lu Boyuan smiled. "I personally wanted to let other people know."

Jian Rong's face went red when he heard that.

The sound of someone walking downstairs came from inside the base. It was most likely Ding-*ge* coming to find them.

Jian Rong rubbed his face. "Are you going to practice?"

Lu Boyuan hummed.

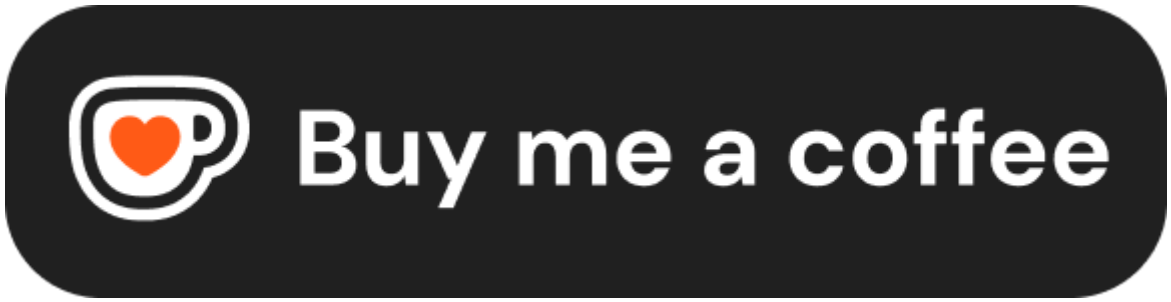
Just as Jian Rong walked over to the balcony door, someone tugged on his shirt.

He stopped in place and started to look back as an arm wrapped itself around his neck and a hand tilted his chin upwards.

Lu Boyuan ducked his head and pressed a brief kiss against the corner of Jian Rong's mouth before he relinquished his grip. "Let's go."

Yan: Happy 100 chapters to ICDI! ^0^ hard to believe we've come so far :') I don't think I've ever broken the hundred chapter mark for anything I've translated before lol

Wei: Yay 100 chapters!! Also Jian Rong, poor baby, it must've been hard ;-; You will definitely find more than enough happiness with Lu Boyuan from now on!!



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ICDI Chapter 101: Flamers are so easy to please.

Ding-*ge* walked downstairs, massaging the space between his eyebrows.

With so many staff right outside of the elevator earlier today, what Lu Boyuan said would probably end up spreading all over Weibo and Tieba in a matter of days. Ding-*ge*'s one saving grace was that at least Lu Boyuan had said "partner" and not "boyfriend," or else how could Ding-*ge* possibly still be living happily at that current moment.

Upon looking up and seeing the two of them come in from the balcony, Ding-*ge*, as an ultra-straight man, instantly imagined a bout of Revealing_Balcony_Activities.avi. At the same time his inner world was collapsing, he maintained his cool. "…how come you're still not going upstairs to practice yet? Xiao Bai and the rest want to order coffee, we mentioned you on WeChat but you two didn't answer. What do you want to drink? It's the same coffee shop we ordered from the last two times."

Jian Rong randomly listed off a type of coffee. Lu Boyuan was even more casual about it. "The same as him."

With the support of coffee, everyone collectively practiced until three AM that night.

Ding-*ge* had requested a long vacation from his wife and was staying overnight in the base these days. Lu Boyuan was about to start another game when Ding-*ge* stopped him.

Ding-*ge* whispered, “Enough, stop practicing, how long have you been playing?”

Lu Boyuan checked the time. “Only about four hours or so.”

“BS, it’s been six hours.” Ding-*ge* said, “The doctor told you not to train for more than three hours every day. Now that you’ve suddenly doubled that quota, whose fault is it if something happens?”

Lu Boyuan glanced at Jian Rong, who was currently wearing headphones over both ears as he solo queued, and said indifferently, “Well, the doctor also recommended that I retire.”

Ding-*ge* was immediately provoked by the word “retire,” and no matter what Lu Boyuan said, Ding-*ge* didn’t allow him to keep practicing anymore.

Lu Boyuan didn’t keep pushing the issue either. He turned off his computer and headed back to his room; as he passed by Jian Rong, he patted him on the head and told him not to play till too late.

As usual, Jian Rong was streaming to pass the time. However, he was a little less talkative than normal tonight.

He kept thinking about Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian’s conversation from a while ago—since Lu Boyuan came from such a good family, would his parents agree to him being together with a man? Even if they did agree, with Jian Rong’s own family circumstances…

But upon remembering that brief kiss, he also felt a little happy.

He spotted yet another person stirring up rumors in the barrage about how "*Road was getting special treatment due to his high salary and was the first to leave the practice room every time*." Jian Rong minimized the game interface and picked out that dumbass from among the numerous barrage comments before he kicked and blocked that person from his livestream room.

Lu Boyuan returned to his room and locked the door. Then, he pulled out a box of cigarettes and a lighter from underneath the old keyboard sitting in the bottom shelf of his bookcase and sat down next to the bay window.

Lu Boyuan didn't often reminisce about the past, so it was easy for some small, trivial matters to be drowned out in his memories. For example, Jian Rong—Lu Boyuan only remembered that he had once given a kid a ticket for free before, and that it had almost been resold for a profit. He couldn't remember the finer details at all.

But tonight, the appearance of the kid in his memories suddenly crystallized.

He was a little shorter than other teenagers his age, and his hair looked like it had been freshly cut. He sat on the ground, arms around his knees. Disregarding the pout and sour expression on his face from being pissed off by the internet cafe owner, he was a very obedient-looking kid.

Before he encountered Lu Boyuan, how many stores had rejected him?

His parents were gone and his grandpa was in the hospital, so who was there to look after him at home?

Was he able to take care of his own food and drink?

Later on, how did he pass the days all by himself?

…

Lu Boyuan shook off the cigarette ashes into an improvised, low-quality "ashtray." He felt like he had to stop going down this path, or else he would probably have to sneak out of the base to buy a few more cigarette packs.

With his cigarette in one hand, he logged into his Tieba account that had sat untouched for quite some time. He entered "SoftBar" and made a post.

The active forum members were all watching Jian Rong's stream at the moment. After nobody replied within half a minute, Lu Boyuan was in the middle of contemplating whether he should go to Weibo and post there as well when a WeChat message popped up.

Ding-*ge* sent a photo over. The camera was directed at his exterior window, and the streak of white smoke was extremely conspicuous against the darkness of the night.

[Ding-*ge*: …what the hell is this?]

[Ding-*ge*: Are you smoking??]

[R: …]

[R: [Incoming transfer of 20,000 *yuan*]]

[Ding-*ge*: …… wtf?]

[R: Let me ask you something.]

[Ding-*ge*: What?]

[R: What kind of things do you usually do to make our sister-in-law happy?]

When two minutes passed without receiving an answer, Lu Boyuan took a drag on his cigarette before he continued typing.

[R: Don't you have a younger brother who just turned 18? What do 18-year-old teenagers like nowadays?]

[R: How long did you date our sister-in-law before getting married?]

[Ding-*ge*: First of all, my brother's the same age as you. Second—do you think my experiences can be applied to you and your boyfriend??]

[Ding-*ge*: Wait a sec? What marriage? You guys haven't even won Worlds yet and you're getting married? Also you'll have to go overseas to get married, does your boyfriend have a passport? I'm warning you, you better not cause trouble for me, I'm already over thirty years old I can't handle a single tiny surprise of any kind……]

Those two texts gave Lu Boyuan an inexplicably nice feeling.

Sensing the weight on his chest lift somewhat, Lu Boyuan put out his cigarette and replied:

[R: We're not getting married for now, good night.]

—

With the semifinals imminently approaching, the number of practice matches scheduled actually decreased.

Since the four strongest teams were about to play against each other, of course they couldn't take the risk of revealing their strategies in a practice match at a time like this. The spring season had already finished for the rest of the teams, so the majority of them were on break by now.

However, as Ding-*ge* liked to put it, there wasn't really a point to hugging the Buddha's feet at the last minute. It was fine as long as they played some ranked every day to maintain their feel for the game—as a result, over the past two days, the five members essentially lived in the practice room. The auntie even brought their dinners in for them so they could eat there.

"My food's gone cold." Xiao Bai chatted pitifully with the barrage. "Yeah, we've been practicing super hard lately, we train for more than ten hours each day. But I believe that our investment will definitely pay off—thank you 'Bai Darling Has Worked Hard' for the Meteor Shower."

The little bluenette next to him, who practiced for a minimum of twelve hours daily, expressed his disdain for this pity-inducing method of cheating out gifts by attacking Xiao Bai with a cold scoff.

Xiao Bai acted as if he hadn't heard him and happily accepted his gifts. "Ah, that's right, didn't our team's merch go on sale today? Since I'm in queue anyway, let me go admire my superior sales…"

Half a minute later, Xiao Bai leaned in towards his screen in disbelief. "One, ten, hundred, thousand, ten thousand… damn, how come Jian Rong's merch

has sold so much? It's almost caught up to my *ge*'s??! Weren't all his dad fans swearing up and down that they wouldn't buy anything—"

Yuan Qian: "Those dad fans also said that they wouldn't send him gifts even if he were starving to death, but if you pull up the platform's gift ranking right now, isn't he in the top ten?"

Xiao Bai sighed. "Men are all liars."

Yuan Qian: "Also, last time he and Captain wore each other's merch hats to the competition. That advertising effectiveness, unbelievable."

"*Ge*!" Xiao Bai whipped his head around and said magnanimously, "How about I give you one of my merch hats?"

"Don't, there's no space." Lu Boyuan glanced at his minimap and said, "The support and jungler are in the underbrush on the right. Let's kill them along with their mid laner."

Jian Rong, who was in the same game as him, said, "Okay."

Xiao Bai propped his head up on his hand and stared at the person sitting next to him. "With your amount of sales… no matter what, you should be treating me to ten meals."

Jian Rong said, "Sure."

He replied somewhat absent-mindedly.

Since he couldn't duo queue in Challenger, this was his only game that entire day in which he had matched with Lu Boyuan. He didn't want to spare

any of his attention elsewhere.

Lu Boyuan's Lee Sin ward hopped and struck the enemy support, who had just flashed, with a predicted Q. The angle of his ult was perfect for sending both the enemy support and the jungler in the underbrush flying with his kick, allowing Jian Rong's Yasuo to successfully follow up with an extremely satisfying ult—

[With Road's Lee Sin present, even I can play Yasuo too.]

[Good lord, my son writes Road into his family register this very night!]

[If I were that Yasuo, I'd bow to him in marriage then and there, alright?]

For once, Jian Rong felt like the comments in his barrage were pleasing to look at.

Now that the opposing team's mid laner, jungler, and support were all dead, of course they were going to seize the opportunity to take the drake.

At that moment, Jian Rong suddenly saw the Lee Sin next to him in the game stop in place.

Jian Rong's gaze was fixed on Lu Boyuan's character. "What's the matter?"

Lu Boyuan slowly stretched his fingers out a few times before he gripped his mouse again. "Nothing, I'm coming."

They easily won that game. Jian Rong checked his damage output before he closed the scoreboard, satisfied.

He pulled off his headphones on one side and looked back, pretending to act natural as he asked, “Captain… wanna enter the queue together?”

Although he couldn’t duo queue, they were both highly ranked, so if they entered the queue simultaneously, it was extremely likely that they would match into the same game.

Lu Boyuan said, “I’m good, you go ahead.”

Jian Rong paused for a moment before he pressed his lips together and turned his head back. “Okay.”

Flamers typically weren’t very good at concealing their emotions. With his eyes lowered, even Jian Rong’s “*okay*” sounded somewhat unhappy.

Before, he always thought that things like entering the queue at the same time as someone else were unnecessary and too lovey-dovey. Then today, he wasn’t able to hold back and voiced such an invitation for the first time ever, only to be rejected.

The barrage was full of comments like “*as everyone knows Yasuo has no relatives and no friends*,” “*hahaha he doesn’t wanna play with you*,” and “*this is God Lu’s first time rejecting you, you better properly reflect back on what mistake you made in the last game*.”

Just as Jian Rong was about to turn against them and directly shut off his stream, a man’s hand reached towards the side of his face and pressed very gently against it for a brief second.

“I’ll accompany you in the queue tomorrow.”

After Lu Boyuan left the practice room, Jian Rong joined the queue again.

He evasively rotated his webcam so that it was facing Xiao Bai's barrage before he tugged up the corners of his lips in a smile.

The barrage went quiet for two seconds—

[Flamers are so easy to please.]

[Flamers are so easy to please.]

…

At four in the morning, when everyone else had already gone to sleep, Jian Rong turned off his computer and went back to his room to shower. The moment he laid down on his bed, he fell asleep.

Perhaps the more exhausted he was, the less soundly he slept; though he was usually someone who could sleep all the way to noon, he was woken up by the patter of rain that morning just past daybreak.

Jian Rong had been keeping his windows open lately while sleeping, which allowed the spring rain to slip inside, mixed with an earthy soil smell.

He rubbed his eyes and stood up to close the window. All of a sudden, he heard noise come from the corridor.

Jian Rong checked the time: it was 7:30 AM.

At this hour, the auntie wouldn't be up on the third floor, not even to clean.

Recalling the robbery that had occurred during the Lunar New Year break, Jian Rong picked up a nearby clothes hanger and lightened his footsteps as he went to open the door—

Then, he met the gaze of their assistant coach.

The assistant coach had one hand wrapped around the doorknob to Lu Boyuan's room. Upon seeing Jian Rong, he was also taken aback. "…you're up this early? Did I wake you up because I was too loud?"

Jian Rong glanced at the jacket the assistant coach was holding before he looked at the dark room across from his. "What happened?"

The assistant coach coughed. "Nothing happened… it's just raining outside and the temperature is a bit low, so Ding-*ge* told me to bring them a jacket."

An ominous premonition welled up, and Jian Rong asked, "Bring it to where?"

"Just, over to where they are…"

Jian Rong lost his patience and directly interrupted him. "Where are they right now?"

Thirty minutes later, holding Lu Boyuan's jacket, Jian Rong got out of the car in front of the hospital entrance.

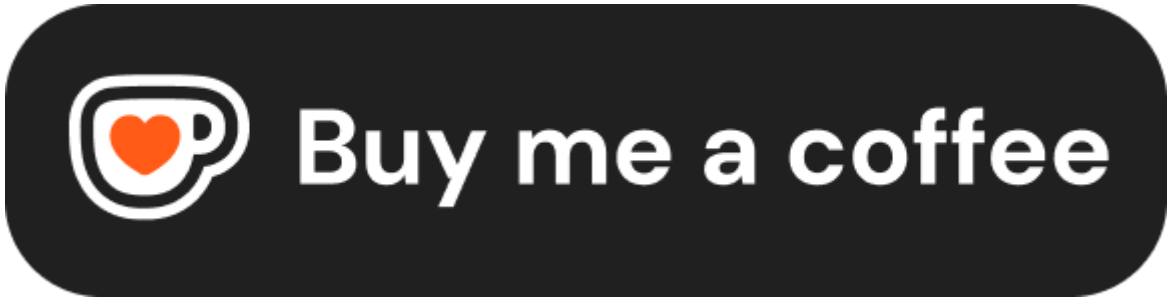
The hospital was as packed as ever despite it being the early morning. While the assistant coach went to park the car, Jian Rong followed his

instructions and went up to the fourth floor before turning left into the hospital's surgical department.

Lu Boyuan was sitting there on a bench outside.

He wore a mask and thin casual clothing. His long legs were bent and spread apart casually, and his head was tilted back lazily, pressed against the wall as he rested with his eyes closed.

When Jian Rong saw the white bandages wrapped around Lu Boyuan's right wrist, his mind blanked out, and he stopped on the spot with the jacket still in his arms.



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ICDI Chapter 102: .

Many thanks to Somebody for the Ko-fi!

After getting used to plush gaming chairs, it was impossible to get comfortable on the hard, narrow hospital bench.

The mask was too stuffy, so Lu Boyuan slowly opened his eyes and tugged down the edge of the mask lightly. He stared up at the ceiling as he took in a few breaths of fresh air.

Abruptly, he sensed that there was someone watching him. Maintaining that same position, he tilted his head over.

The teenager had thrown on a random coat, and its collar was crooked since he was in too much of a rush putting it on. Two tufts of blue hair were also sticking straight up into the air from being crushed too thoroughly in his sleep. Even though his face had already fallen, he was still tightly holding onto the jacket in his arms as he stood there, looking silently at Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan let out a curse in his mind before he straightened his head up. He was about to stand up when Jian Rong walked towards him first.

After only getting three hours of sleep, Jian Rong had been in a complete daze upon waking up, and he had felt like he was floating when he picked up the clothes hanger and opened his door. The assistant coach had

prattled away incessantly on the drive over, trying to persuade him to go back and sleep, which ended up making his head ache.

It was only at this moment, when Jian Rong saw the bandages wrapped around Lu Boyuan's wrist, that he finally, truly woke up.

"Put on the jacket." His voice was raspy, and he also spoke very stiffly.

Lu Boyuan took the jacket and lifted his hand to put it on.

"Hang on." Jian Rong frowned and asked, "Are you allowed to raise your right hand?"

Lu Boyuan said, "I am."

Jian Rong watched him slip on the jacket, his gaze unconsciously glued to Lu Boyuan's right hand. "Does it hurt?"

Lu Boyuan said softly, "There's anesthesia, so it doesn't."

Jian Rong clenched his teeth, distressed, and didn't say anything.

He could faintly guess that Lu Boyuan had a hand injury, and he had also searched online about it before, but he wasn't able to find out what kind of injury it was. In order to get clicks, those marketing account articles were full of words like "*suspected to be*" and "*guess*," and he didn't believe any of them.

He consoled himself that as long as Lu Boyuan hadn't retired, it meant that it wasn't a very serious injury.

Lu Boyuan lifted his left hand and kneaded Jian Rong's fingers. "Did you eat breakfast?"

Expressionless, Jian Rong allowed Lu Boyuan to hold his hand. "No."

Lu Boyuan asked lazily, "I'll take you to eat something?"

Jian Rong glanced at the empty bread packaging lying on the chair next to him and said, "No, I'm not hungry."

Lu Boyuan gave an "*en*." "Sit down and talk? It's a bit tiring to look up like this."

After Jian Rong sat down, he pulled out his phone and opened up the LoL assistant app.

Lu Boyuan slanted a look at him. "What are you checking?"

Jian Rong clicked on Lu Boyuan's match history and slid all the way to the bottom before saying, "You have a hand injury and you still played for five hours yesterday?!"

"…"

Lu Boyuan said, "It wasn't five hours, I rested for a while in the middle."

Jian Rong confirmed, "Are you talking about that twenty minute break you took to eat?"

Lu Boyuan went quiet for a few seconds. Then he asked, "The semifinals are tomorrow, if it were you, would you rest?"

Jian Rong instantly fell silent.

He wouldn't.

Their feel for the game was extremely important; resting during the days immediately prior to a competitive match was equivalent to seeking out trouble.

Jian Rong pursed his lips. "You could've practiced a little less."

"A pro gamer only trains for five hours a day, and you want him to practice even less…" Lu Boyuan laughed. "Aren't you opening the backdoor a bit too wide for your boyfriend?"

Jian Rong's mood was still very poor, but his expression wasn't so icy anymore.

"What did the doctor say? How long do you have to rest?" He paused before lowering his voice some more. "…can it be cured?"

Lu Boyuan's injury had to do with muscle strain and tendon inflammation, so he had undergone a minimally invasive surgery.

During the treatment, the doctor said many things that weren't very optimistic, but Lu Boyuan didn't tell Jian Rong that. He only said simply, "Three days."

As he was saying that, the door to the consulting room nearby opened and Ding-*ge* walked out from inside. Right away, he knew what they were

talking about. “What three days? The doctor told you to recuperate for a week!”

Only then did Ding-*ge* realize who was sitting next to Lu Boyuan.

He froze in the middle of closing the door, eyes wide. A beat later, he said, “How come you’re here? This… eight AM? And you’re awake??”

“I was too loud opening the door and I woke him up.” The slow-to-arrive assistant coach scratched the back of his head. “Then when he heard about Xiao Lu’s injury, he insisted on coming with me. I didn’t agree at first, so he took out his phone to try and call a taxi on his own…”

Ding-*ge* thought, *You already mentioned his boyfriend’s name, it would be weirder if he didn’t come*.

“Enough, let’s go downstairs to get the medicine so we can return to the base.” Ding-*ge* beckoned towards them. “It’s still early right now, there’s time for you to get some more sleep once we get back.”

Jian Rong wasn’t sleepy in the slightest. After getting into the car, he would stare out the window for a while before switching to staring at Lu Boyuan’s hand.

“I already let someone from the LPL know. I told them that we’re sending our substitute out tomorrow for the semifinals.” Ding-*ge* typed away on his phone. “Give Moon a call at eleven AM today and tell him to come over for practice. I scheduled two practice matches for this afternoon.”

The assistant coach let out an "*ah*." "It's confirmed that Boyuan won't be able to play?"

Ding-*ge* said, "BS, he can't even move his hand right now, it's useless for the rest of this week."

Sensing Jian Rong's gaze, Lu Boyuan furrowed his brows. "It's not that bad."

Ding-*ge*: "That was what the doctor himself said, okay?"

"Is Moon really going to play in the semifinals?" The assistant coach was somewhat hesitant. "He doesn't have a lot of competition experience, and last year's semifinals nearly destroyed his mentality."

"What? After losing a semifinals match once, he won't play in any semifinals ever again?"

The assistant coach sighed. "...well, no, but I'm just worried about us losing again."

Lu Boyuan: "We won't lose."

Jian Rong: "Who's gonna lose?"

Both of them spoke at the same time, startling the assistant coach.

"I believe in my teammates." Lu Boyuan flashed a smile and said evenly, "They can win."

The doorbell rang as soon as they returned to the base. Ding-*ge* tapped on the digital peephole, and upon seeing the takeout delivery driver standing

outside the door, he said in a puzzled voice, “Who ordered takeout?”

Lu Boyuan said, “Me.”

“Didn’t you already eat breakfast?”

Lu Boyuan looked at Jian Rong. “I ordered it for him.”

Jian Rong was originally planning to go upstairs to practice and had already started ascending the staircase. When he heard that, he turned around again and silently walked towards the door, calling out to the assistant coach who was going to help him get the takeout. “I won’t trouble you… I’ll pick it up myself.”

After the others woke up and saw Moon in the practice room, they were all quite stunned. Upon hearing the entire story, they were even more shocked.

Once the surprise wore off, they threw themselves entirely into the practice matches.

Moon was different from Lu Boyuan. Lu Boyuan could play either carry jungler or provide support, but in comparison, Moon’s carry jungler was fairly weak.

However, his ability to assist had improved significantly, and he was decent at engaging too, which was more than enough when facing off against some middle-tier teams. At level 3, Xiao Bai and Pine directly tower dove and forcefully killed their opponents, securing the bot lane’s advantage by exchanging one life for two. Meanwhile, Yuan Qian was suppressing the other team’s top laner so much that he didn’t even dare to leave the tower.

The person with the most remarkable performance was still Jian Rong.

His playstyle was already fierce in the first place, but that was even more so the case today.

“Damn.” Xiao Bai, who switched his camera to the mid lane for a few seconds, couldn’t help but say, “The other guy just auto attacked the minion, he wasn’t gonna kill it, what’s the meaning of you slapping an Ignite over his head…”

Before he could finish, Jian Rong turned slightly to the side and dodged Neeko’s binding skill. Then, controlling Talon, he immediately unleashed a proficient combo, causing the enemy’s health to plummet at once. The opposing mid laner instantly used his flash to try and escape, but Jian Rong followed up with his own flash astonishingly quickly. With one final auto attack, he scored the kill.

[MFG-Kongkong: *Ge*, have I done something to offend you?]

[MFG-Kongkong: If I’m guilty of something, the law will punish me, you don’t have to pick Talon to torture me.]

[MFG-Kongkong: Speaking of which, how come God Lu isn’t here today?]

Pine glanced at the chat box and said to Xiao Bai, “I found someone who’s even worse than you at talking.”

“Nonsense.” Xiao Bai alleviated the atmosphere, “No matter in what regard, I’m always the absolute best!”

After that practice match concluded, Kongkong, who had just lost the last round of his quarterfinals match and was facing the risk of losing his starting position, went even further into self-seclusion.

During practice that night, Xiao Bai patted Jian Rong's shoulder during the champion selection phase. With an elder's tone of voice, he said, "Don't worry, let's play well tomorrow. Our chances of winning are still quite high, we have a lot of experience with BO5…"

Jian Rong turned his head and repeated, "Our chances of winning are quite high?"

"Yeah, we've never lost to Fighting Tiger before in a BO5 match…"

Jian Rong said, "We won't lose tomorrow either."

Xiao Bai was startled.

"We can definitely win!" Yuan Qian, who was playing ranked behind them, spared a moment to pump his fist in the air. "We'll take care of them fast, 3:0!"

Moon pressed his lips together repeatedly. "I… I'll play well tomorrow for sure, I'll give it my all."

"If we lose as long as Captain isn't here, then we might as well just disband on the spot," Pine said indifferently. "Zhuang Yibai, stop idling, go put down some wards."

"...got it got it, don't you have wards on you right now? You really have to make me do it? Only I indulge you like this..." Xiao Bai mumbled to himself before he said, "That's right, we'll definitely win, I gotta go to MSI to pummel HT's dog heads!!!"

The next day, Lu Boyuan still put on his team uniform and headed to the stadium with them.

Earlier at noon, the team's official account had posted on Weibo, notifying the fans that Lu Boyuan needed to recuperate for a week due to an injury and that the substitute, Moon, would be playing during the semifinals instead.

On that post, the number of comments skyrocketed. Before the match even began, #Road injured and absent from the semifinals# started trending on the hot search first.

Out of the several thousand comments, not a single one was optimistic. The fans were worried about the antis taking delight in the bad news; while they were at it, the antis mocked all of the other TTC members too.

The one ridiculed the most was Moon. Second was Jian Rong.

Moon didn't have many fans, so even when he was insulted, there was no one to really help him counterattack. Those comments would have a couple thousand likes, but almost zero replies.

But the comment insulting Jian Rong was different.

It was the weekend, so all the dad fans were either done with school or work and were lazing around at home, waiting for the match. Their combat strength was truly astounding as they traded insults back and forth with the antis for quite some time. Presently, the most recent few comments in that thread were—

[He's here to compete, so what if he's insulted a bit, considering how much he's making in a year? Isn't it normal to be flamed if you don't play well??]

[Okokok even though my son got MVP six times during the regular season he still doesn't play well, does he need to split your head open in order to prove that he can fight well?]

[The club is the one giving him that money, what does it have to do with you dumbass? Why're you trying to make yourself seem so important?]

[I just checked out your Weibo, oh man, you feel the need to post a screenshot and show off when you only got a triple kill in Gold 3? With your shitty skill level, can you even tell if someone else is playing well or not? Judging from your recent match history, you also found a booster, huh? After being beaten up to the point of tears in the game, you found a booster to take care of things for you, while in reality, you viciously attack a pro player? Just wait dumbass, your account is definitely going to be banned tonight.]

[…it was wrong of me to say that. It wasn't a booster, my friend helped play for me. Don't report me ah. I'm deleting my comment, isn't that enough? Stop replying to me…]

…

Jian Rong was totally unaware of the online disputes. Ding-*ge* was prepared long in advance this time, and he had stared at them as they deleted those mobile apps one by one off their phones.

When they arrived at the stadium, the competition livestream hadn't started yet. The TV in the break room was replaying Fighting Tiger's post-match interview from the previous quarterfinals match.

The pro player being interviewed was their mid laner, Da Niu. When the host asked Da Niu if he thought his team could win or not next week against TTC, Da Niu chuckled confidently.

"Last time, if Road wasn't there, we would've won." Da Niu shrugged. "To tell the truth, besides Road, everyone else in that team is really easy to deal with."

Jian Rong had already watched this interview before, so he wasn't really affected upon seeing it again. He leaned back against the sofa, listening attentively to Ding-*ge*'s analysis.

"We have to ban Da Niu's Twisted Fate today, or else our bot lane won't be able to play." Ding-*ge* looked at Moon. "Make sure to pay attention to the drakes. Their jungler is very good at stealing them, and they're too good at team fighting. The moment they get their hands on the Dragon Soul and group together, it's almost impossible for us to make a comeback from that…"

After chattering away for a while, Ding-*ge* finally stopped to take a break and drink water.

"How come Da Niu-*ge* also knows how to trash talk now?" Xiao Bai said, crossing both hands behind his head.

Pine said, "Inflated ego."

"It's not too bad, as if you guys don't say the same things?" Yuan Qian laughed before he looked towards Lu Boyuan. "Captain, how's your hand? Does it still hurt."

Lu Boyuan shook his head. "I'll be able to take off the bandages once we get back."

"No you can't." Ding-*ge* instantly said, "The doctor said that you have to keep it on for three days at the minimum."

"Just keep it wrapped," Pine said, "so it can recover a bit more. There's still the finals after this."

Xiao Bai shot upright. "Exactly! *Ge*, recuperate well, then take me to Korea. I have to insult that piece of shit Rish to his face!"

Lu Boyuan smiled. "Alright. Then I'll be lying here, waiting for you all to carry me into the finals."

Jian Rong's lips parted, but in the end, he still didn't end up speaking.

Anything he said now was meaningless. Once he won the match, he would have all the time in the world to say the things he wanted to say.

Upon seeing the members act so relaxed, Ding-*ge* let out a sigh of relief, until he spotted Moon, who was sitting on the far right.

The air conditioning was on in the room, but Moon was sweating. He gripped his hands together over his knees, looking extremely tense and panicked.

Ding-*ge* frowned. He was about to approach him and console him a little when a staff member suddenly pushed open the door and entered, instructing them to get ready to go on stage.

Moon repeatedly drew in a few deep breaths before he reached up and wiped off the sweat on his forehead—

"Don't be nervous." A low and deep voice sounded from behind him.

Moon whipped his head around and stared at Lu Boyuan blankly.

"Their jungler doesn't know how to play carry, so your jungle won't be under any pressure. If the team needs it, you can attempt an invade when the other side is playing a weak jungler, no need to be afraid." Lu Boyuan said mildly, "This won't be your last semifinals match. Relax, play well."

Moon looked at him for a long time before he nodded heavily. "…okay!"

Jian Rong took a big gulp of water.

He hadn't even reacted to Da Niu's taunting earlier, but at that current moment, his expression had already grown somewhat colder.

He told himself in his head, *As the captain, it's normal for Lu Boyuan to reassure the substitute a little when he's about to play in such an important match…*

But it was obvious that this Moon thought of Lu Boyuan a bit differently.

With only a few words from Lu Boyuan, Moon acted as if he had been revived completely. His face wasn't stiff anymore, and his legs stopped shaking too…

While Jian Rong ate vinegar, he also felt like he was overthinking things.

"Let's go." Ding-*ge* adjusted his suit. "It's time to go on stage."

Jian Rong grabbed his water bottle and was about to stand up when someone next to him suddenly gripped his arm.

A faint medicinal scent clung to Lu Boyuan, originating from his bandages.

Lu Boyuan tilted his head downwards and said quietly, "…boyfriend, if you carry me to victory this match, I'll give you a reward once we get back. Deal?"

Buy me a coffee

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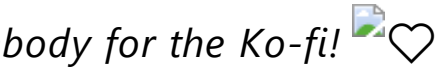
ICDI Chapter 103: Penta kill.

Thank you Somebody for the Ko-fi! 

The break room was completely empty. Lu Boyuan leaned back against the sofa, watching the match livestream.

Both teams took the stage, and the camera gave each pro player a close-up one by one, with the last shot being Jian Rong.

Jian Rong's bangs were wet, and one lock of hair was still plastered to his forehead. After sitting down, he expressionlessly lowered his head and started to check his peripherals. Over the course of all their matches, he was already very familiar with this process.

When Lu Boyuan remembered how Jian Rong had flat-out sprinted to the bathroom to wash his face the minute before they had to go on stage, he couldn't help but feel an urge to laugh.

There was a camera focused on him nearby, so in the end, he only lifted the corner of his mouth for a few seconds before restraining himself again.

As usual, the same old faces were in charge of commentating on the match today. There wasn't a strict age limit for commentators, so the turnover rate was similar to the speed of a snail. The new commentators were constantly being nitpicked, so whenever there was a major competition, the older commentators were always the ones sent in.

“I can guess what the commentators are saying right now even with my headphones on.” Xiao Bai coughed and forced his voice lower as he imitated, “Road’s absence in the semifinals can be considered a heavy blow to TTC. But no worries, I trust that Moon will definitely be able to give an outstanding performance this time and contribute his strength to the team…”

Before he could finish speaking, someone knocked a notebook against his head.

Ding-*ge* scolded him quietly, “Causing trouble for your teammates right off the bat? Are you done with your inspection yet?!”

“Owie.” Xiao Bai rubbed his head. “Aren’t I just trying to alleviate the atmosphere?”

His headphones were full of his teammates’ voices. Jian Rong examined his keyboard, with Lu Boyuan’s words still floating through his mind.

He drew in a deep breath and couldn’t resist imagining again what kind of reward it would be…

Damn, I’m about to compete, what the fuck am I thinking about?

Jian Rong lifted his hand and slapped himself forcefully on the forehead. There was a lot of power behind the slap, and the crisp “*pa*” noise was transmitted into his teammates’ headphones.

The team voice chat, along with the entire audience at the stadium and those watching the livestream: “……”

Xiao Bai was astonished. “What are you doing… no matter how much pressure you’re under, you don’t need to go that far…”

Jian Rong ignored him. After he was done inspecting his computer, he reached up and raked his bangs back, away from his forehead.

He simply felt that his bangs were a bit long and were getting in his eyes, but that scene just happened to be captured and projected onto the broadcast. Some young women who had come to the stadium in groups were all stunned when they saw him do that, and immediately, they let out hushed shrieks—

Commentator A: “…Soft really is handsome, does TTC’s owner pick his pro players based on how good-looking they are?”

Commentator B: “So you’re saying Soft only has his good looks and no other strengths?”

“You…” Commentator A choked back his curses. Taking advantage of the camera being focused elsewhere, he put on a fake smile and said to Commentator B, “Don’t you instigate anything between me and Soft, are you going to take responsibility if something happens to me?”

With a quick exchange, the commentators eased the tense atmosphere. Right as the TTC fans, who were originally worried and nervous, started to relax, the livestream switched screens—the match entered the pick/ban phase.

The current meta’s powerful champions were banned one by one.

Xiao Bai: “Fuck, they’re not banning Lee Sin now that my *ge* isn’t here. Should we ban him?”

“No, let them pick him if they want. Nobody’s afraid of that champion unless he’s on our team.” Ding-*ge* looked at his notebook. “Let Jian Rong counterpick this game. Pine, what do you want to play?”

The counterpick was the very last player to select their champion; they could see the other team’s entire team composition before deciding what champion to take for themselves.

“Ah? Their mid laner locked in Ryze??” Yuan Qian said, shocked, “Am I seeing things?”

Xiao Bai was also startled. “There are still people playing Ryze in this meta? Even Kassadin or Azir would be a better choice than that, right.”

“Da Niu’s already an old school pro player, and old school pro players just like playing old school champions. What’s more, he became famous because of his Ryze, so it’s normal for him to pick that champion.” Ding-*ge* analyzed calmly, “Pine chose Ezreal, so why don’t we go with a poke comp? LeBlanc and Syndra are both gone, Jian Rong, take either Orianna or Ziggs?”

Jian Rong said evenly, “Considering how weak Ryze is in the early game, why not pick a champion who can suppress him?”

“Then what do you want to play?” Coolly, Ding-*ge* said, “If you dare say Talon or Zed, I’ll call Riot right now and tell them to delete those two champions.”

Jian Rong didn't speak. Instead, he preselected Cassiopeia.

Cassiopeia was a champion that was extremely good at kiting and sustained damage; she could reduce or gain movement speed, and her ult could petrify and stun all enemies within its target direction for two seconds.

But this champion's disadvantage was also very obvious—she didn't have any blink skills, nor did she have high burst damage.

This was the complete opposite of the champions that Jian Rong usually liked to play.

Ding-*ge* was taken aback. He was about to ask "*you know how to play Cassiopeia?*", but when the words reached his mouth, he remembered that Jian Rong did indeed know how.

He had looked into it before Jian Rong joined the team: Jian Rong's champion pool was extremely deep. However… this Cassiopeia, he hadn't really seen Jian Rong play her again since entering the team.

"This is a competitive match." Ding-*ge* confirmed, "Are you certain that you can play her well?"

Jian Rong frowned. "What are you asking the world's number one Cassiopeia?"

Ding-*ge*: "…"

Jian Rong locked in Cassiopeia. With both sides' team compositions settled, Ding-*ge* shook hands with the other coach and left the stage.

Presently, Fighting Tiger's team composition was: Sion top, Lee Sin jungle, Ryze mid, Ashe ADC, and Blitzcrank support.

TTC's team composition was: Ornn top, Kindred jungle, Cassiopeia mid, Ezreal ADC, and Alistar support.

"Judging from the team comps, neither side is lacking." Commentator A sucked in air through his teeth. "But… Soft's Cassiopeia? Have you seen it before?"

Commentator B shook his head. "I checked his match history yesterday night. There wasn't a single Cassiopeia in the entire twenty pages."

Commentator C was very calm. "After seeing his Zed from that one game some time ago, I'm not surprised anymore no matter what champion he brings out."

As they were talking, the match officially began, and both teams' champions entered Summoner's Rift.

Jian Rong left the base after buying his items. Evidently, neither side intended to have a level 1 team fight, and they all returned to their respective lanes after merely bumping into each other in the jungle.

On the other side, Fighting Tiger's mid laner, Da Niu, suddenly let out a "*ss*."

A teammate asked, "What's the matter?"

“Nothing.” Da Niu clicked his mouse and said, amazed, “Soft didn’t actually flash an icon at me or dance today, even though I taunted him so much during the interview last week.”

“…”

Not only that, the spectators quickly discovered something else.

Compared to before, Jian Rong was playing especially meticulously and carefully this time.

For example, this wave at level 3—Cassiopeia absolutely had the advantage at this point in the game. After Jian Rong shot his Noxious Blast towards the enemy, he immediately dealt damage using Twin Fang, causing Da Niu to lose half his health in the blink of an eye.

Typically, even if Jian Rong had ten flashes, he would’ve used them all up here!

But after he finished dealing his damage, he unexpectedly turned around and went back, swinging his tail, to continue clearing minions. His figure from behind was both serene and tranquil—

[@LPL I want to file a report, this bluenette on the stage is a fake booster, I suspect that my son has most likely been assassinated already by TTC’s manager.]

[@LPL this dumbass probably placed a bet for low kills, please investigate, thank you.]

[That’s it? Not even gonna chase him? Isn’t that way too trash?? If that were me, I would’ve already solo killed Da Niu.]

[[Sharing a website link: TTC Trainee Recruitment Announcement] The dumbass above, go ahead.]

[How could he possibly have gone all in this wave? Fighting Tiger’s jungler is right there at the side getting the raptors, if Soft really had given chase, he definitely would’ve died there, regardless of whether he killed or didn’t kill Da Niu.]

Da Niu, laning against him, was similarly puzzled. He couldn’t help but ask his team’s jungler, who had remained hidden for quite a while near him, “Is it because my acting isn’t good enough?”

“Maybe he isn’t in a good condition since Road isn’t here.” The jungler said, “I’m leaving, you two slowly and harmoniously clear minions together.”

The two of them peacefully farmed to level 7 in the mid lane.

Jian Rong left the base. “Xiao Bai.”

Xiao Bai, who was attentively and diligently headbutting enemies in the bot lane with Alistar, replied, “Yeah?”

Jian Rong kept it brief. “Come and get him.”

“Alrighty!”

Xiao Bai pretended to recall to base in front of the opposing bot lane. Then, he circled into the jungle via a blind spot and headed straight for the

enemy's mid lane.

The moment the line of minions entered the range of Da Niu's tower, Xiao Bai came out from behind and flashed over to Da Niu. Before Da Niu could react in time, Xiao Bai used a skill to push him over to Jian Rong and contributed an Ignite—almost simultaneously, Jian Rong swiftly whipped around from where he was clearing minions and followed up with his own ult. After stunning Da Niu, he dealt out a fierce Twin Fang—

"First blood!"

Their teamwork was smooth and effortless, without a single extraneous move.

Upon getting first blood, Jian Rong swayed his tail and returned to clearing minions. Controlling Alistar's cumbersome body, Xiao Bai leisurely found a shrub and went back to the base.

In the break room, the assistant coach clapped. "Beautiful!!"

Ding-*ge* nodded continuously and sighed to the person next to him, "The practice matches these past few months weren't for nothing… but what's up with Jian Rong today, playing so cautiously? Did he manage to guess that the other team's jungler kept camping him before level 6?"

Lu Boyuan looked at the TV, where Jian Rong was clearing minions carefully and thoroughly. He laughed and didn't say anything else.

Jian Rong got first blood and had barely missed any minions. After upgrading his items, his playstyle changed again when he emerged from

the base.

He started to suppress Da Niu under the tower. The other team's jungler came over several times, but he was caught head-on by Moon, who was camping near the mid lane. The two of them traded a few attacks back and forth before each departing on their own way without doing anything else.

Once Jian Rong wore down the first mid lane turret, he stopped his timid staring match with Da Niu. Instead, he turned around and headed towards the lower jungle, right in front of Da Niu's eyes.

"Soft went into the jungle, they're going for the drake." Da Niu instantly reacted. "Jungler, come here. I'll harass, you try stealing it."

His teammate was startled. "No way? Ten seconds ago, Moon was still in the upper jungle, and the bot lane hasn't left either, how could they be aiming for the drake? Is Soft going in by himself?"

Already halfway there, Da Niu froze and abruptly realized that something wasn't right. He was about to leave when he suddenly heard the sound of a flash in his headphones. Before he could respond, he was stunned on the spot by Jian Rong's ult—

[TTC · Soft has slain ZHcattle]

Yuan Qian, who was peacefully farming and doing *taiji* with Sion in the top lane, paused. "I knew that something was missing."

Moon was confused. "What?"

“Did you not notice?” Yuan Qian said, “In our previous matches, there would almost always be a kill announcement from the mid lane before level 6—either Xiao Rong solo killed the opponent, or he was ganged up on and beaten to death by the enemy jungler and mid laner.”

Moon: “…”

With two kills on hand, as well as five turret plates and first blood, Jian Rong became the person with the most gold in the entire game.

And Jian Rong was a pro player who knew extremely well how to widen his own advantage.

Aware that Da Niu would no longer come out to fight him, Jian Rong began assisting the top and bot lanes with Moon. At the same time, like a bandit, he plundered all the monsters in sight wherever he went.

After Cassiopeia obtained Rylai’s Crystal Scepter, increasing her health, tower diving was no longer a problem at all; he ganked and killed Fighting Tiger’s top laner once. Yuan Qian was playing a tanky engager champion this round, so he didn’t need any kills and yielded it to Jian Rong. Meanwhile, three people guarded the turret in Fighting Tiger’s bot lane, and they unanimously retreated backwards when they saw him.

“This won’t do, if we let Soft go on like this, then we don’t even need to think about playing anymore.” Da Niu pulled up the scoreboard and couldn’t help but let out an expletive. “He’s at sixteen stacks on his Mejai’s Soulstealer, we have to kill him once.”

Mejai's Soulstealer was an item that only extremely self-confident people would purchase. For each champion kill, the player would obtain four stacks of Glory and increase their corresponding ability power. Upon death, they would lose ten stacks of Glory—to Jian Rong, this was considered an essential item.

TTC quickly finished getting the third drake. Fighting Tiger's ward allowed them to see that all the other teammates had recalled to base; only Jian Rong went back to the mid lane by himself to clear minions.

"Their team all returned to base, everyone come over." Da Niu commanded calmly, "Kill him. It doesn't matter if he trades one of us too."

Jian Rong was unaware of the impending storm, but the spectators saw it coming extremely clearly from their bird's-eye view—

Commentator A: "Is Fighting Tiger dead set on killing Soft?!"

Commentator B: "Of course they are, as if they're gonna sit and wait for his Soulstealer to fill up? However, it's not a problem if he dies once. Let's see how Soft will play out this wave. He has good equipment, if he plays well perhaps he could trade two opposing players—they're here!!"

As seen in Jian Rong's first-person perspective in the livestream, while he was recalling to base, he shifted his mouse and checked the area in front of him. Unfortunately, the ward that Xiao Bai had placed a few minutes earlier had just vanished, so the only thing he could see was a stretch of darkness.

The barrage was already spamming—

[Son, rest in peace.]

[You XX, told you to go home but you didn't, you XX, told you not to buy Soulstealer but you insisted on doing it—]

[Damn five people are going straight for the dumbass, it's really a freaking spectacular sight, his death is worth it okay…]

During the last three seconds of Jian Rong returning to base, Fighting Tiger's jungler, Lee Sin, blinked and flashed in. With a grunt, he kicked Cassiopeia into the middle of the other four Fighting Tiger members, who urgently rushed over!

Commentator A: "A beautiful kick! It looks like Soft won't be able to trade any enemies—ah????"

The commentator's sentence was firmly choked back in his throat.

The same instant Jian Rong was kicked over, he turned around in midair[1] and unleashed his petrifying ult—the four Fighting Tiger members had arrived via Ryze's portal, so they weren't able to take into consideration where they were standing. Jian Rong's ult directly stunned all four of his opponents!

He followed up immediately with a flash, increasing the distance between him and the enemies—just as everyone thought that he was going to run away, Cassiopeia swiveled around and spat out a puddle of poison on the ground where the four people were standing.

The damage dealt by Cassiopeia's Twin Fang increased greatly when its targets were poisoned!

In the short two-second duration of the stun, Jian Rong killed off the enemy support, Blitzcrank. The others were also at half-health due to Jian Rong's ult and poison.

Commentator A: "He traded one, he can run now—he still isn't leaving?!!!"

Fighting Tiger's four members emerged from the stunned state and instantly used their own skills. However—if Cassiopeia's Noxious Blast struck an enemy champion, it would substantially raise her own movement speed. While dealing damage, Jian Rong continuously and nimbly repositioned himself—his positioning rendered the audience dumbstruck with his twisting and turning.

Fighting Tiger's top laner couldn't bear it any longer. He used his ult and charged straight towards Jian Rong!

With a *thunk*, Jian Rong used Zhonya's Hourglass, which rendered him invulnerable to all damage and crowd control, causing Sion's ult to miss entirely. Ashe followed closely with his own ult—Jian Rong removed it right away with Cleanse before he turned around and bit Ashe to death with a Twin Fang.

"How the f—" Commentator B, who was usually the calmest of the three, almost let out a swear. "How did he do that?????"

Commentator C shot to his feet. "Cassiopeia is still twisting around! Still twisting!! His movement speed is already as high as it can be! Ryze's skills

can’t even touch him—this moving E!!! Who can even withstand that?!!”

“Double kill!”

“Triple kill!”

Now it was Fighting Tiger’s turn to be afraid. The remaining members wanted to turn and run, but Jian Rong lifted his tail and gave chase—

“Quadra kill!”

“Penta kill!! Can it happen!!! Can it happen!!!!” Commentator A shouted himself hoarse. “Is he still gonna chase—he is!!! Da Niu wants to escape! But how could he possibly outrun a Cassiopeia at max movement speed!!!”

Writhing her tail, Cassiopeia spat out one last fatal Twin Fang—

“Penta kill!”

The spectators stared dumbly.

The commentators were nearly jumping out of their seats.

In the bottom right corner of the screen, the teenager looked as calm as ever, and he hit his “B” key once more to recall to base.

Two seconds later, the screaming of the audience at the stadium overturned the roof—

Commentator A: “What kind of reaction speed is this?! Why is he so terrifying!!!”

Commentator B: “A dangerous 1v5!! Soft is already on a killing spree!!!”

“Amazing! Amazing!! Way too amazing!!!” Commentator C’s voice cracked. “Let us congratulate Soft—for achieving the first penta kill of his professional career!!!”

—

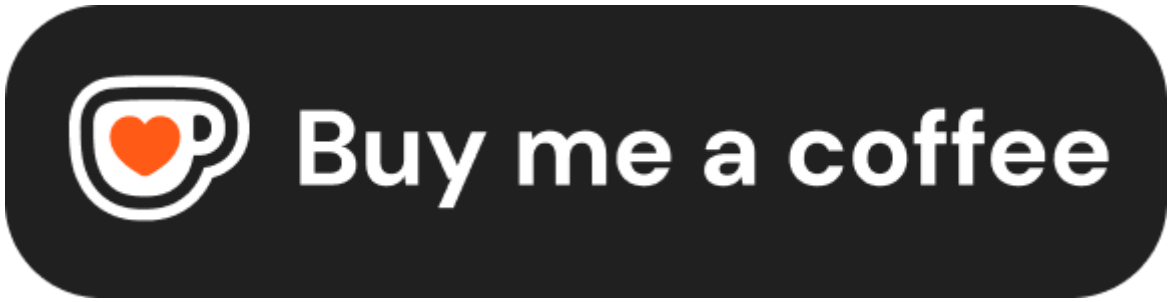
The author has something to say:

He really, truly wants to win.

Translation Notes

1. *In case you were curious like me how Cassiopeia could turn around in midair (usually in games you can’t move after being knocked back/CC’d unless you have a counter skill) – the wiki explains it (check the ult → details). Basically Rongrong has amazing reaction speed and started casting before Lee Sin even kicked him* ^

Yan: I personally thought this chapter was super exciting when I was reading it for the first time (as a non league player LMAO). Maybe the likelihood of actually getting a solo pentakill in a pro game is very slim, but let’s just say Rongrong really wants his prize :eyes: congrats son, Dad is proud (and if you were wondering, it is possible to get a pentakill on Cassiopeia!)



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ICDI C104: Diehard point grubber.

Thank you Somebody and Kaszius for the Ko-fis~

The moment Jian Rong hit the key to recall to base, he was nearly deafened —

Xiao Bai's scalp was tingling. "Waaaahhhhh nice! Nice!!!"

Pine: "Good."

Yuan Qian: "Ahhh woahhhh—"

Moon: "Ah—ah—ah!!!"

The referee supervising the team chat in the back felt like he was listening to four ancient monkeys play a video game.

Jian Rong wasn't fond of playing ranked in five-person parties. Whenever he outplayed before, at the most the barrage would kick up some fuss, so this was his first time hearing a barrage that came with sound.

This made him pause for a second in the middle of buying items. Then he said, "After another wave, we can go for Baron."

"How are you so badass?!" Yuan Qian sucked in a breath of air. "This is my first fucking time seeing someone win a 1v5 in the semifinals!!!"

Moon understood what he was implying. "Has it happened before in the regular season?"

“It has, Master has also won a 1v5 in the regular season before, but he was using LeBlanc. It’s way easier to outplay on that champion that on Cassiopeia—Xiao Rong you’re way too fucking badass!!!”

Xiao Bai said, “I’m covered with goosebumps all over, if you don’t believe me tell Pine to feel my arm! Really!!!”

“Do you want me to be banned?” Pine’s voice was as collected as always.

In reality, Jian Rong’s heart was beating extremely fast. The purpose of playing games was for the excitement of it, after all.

Fighting Tiger wanted to kill him too badly, leading to many holes in that 5v1. In addition, his feel for the game was especially good today—

“Force a team fight.” Jian Rong said, “I’m unsurpassable this round.”

The instant that Jian Rong had achieved the penta kill, the major streamers’ livestream rooms, shopping plazas broadcasting the match live, gaming chat servers and so on were all flooded with screams.

Including the break room backstage.

“Good heavens—how did he do that? Is this what the reaction speed of a young person is like…” The assistant coach had already shouted for a while now, and currently his voice wasn’t much better off than that of the three commentators. Hoarsely, he said, “That wave alone is enough to give him the title of a god, right??”

Ding-*ge* drew in numerous deep breaths and said with a smile, "No need for the 'right.'"

The assistant coach paced back and forth for a long time in the break room before finally calming down. Then, the first thought that popped into his head was: "*Ge*, did we only sign him on for one season?"

Ding-*ge* gave an "*en*."

"…his value is gonna skyrocket immediately." The assistant coach tugged out a tissue and wiped away the sweat on his forehead. "I bet a lot of teams want to steal him. In that case, we have to discuss renewing the contract with him soon…"

"What's the rush, we aren't even done with the spring season yet. Also—" Ding-*ge* peeled apart a tangerine and stuffed a section into his mouth, subconsciously glancing towards the sofa.

The assistant coach followed his line of sight and looked at Lu Boyuan too. "Also what?"

"…also, we have money. What, you think Fu-*ge* wears that gold chain around his neck for nothing?" Ding-*ge* swallowed the tangerine slice. "What's more, this opportunity was given to him by our team. Have you ever seen a team that dares to promote a streamer straight into a starting position? Jian Rong isn't the type of person to bite the hand that feeds him."

Lu Boyuan's tightly clenched hands relaxed only when the director begrudgingly shifted the camera away from Cassiopeia at last.

He let out a long exhale before he ducked his head and laughed.

Jian Rong was very strong; that was something he had known all along. Just by watching a few of Jian Rong's streams, it was clear that his hand speed, reaction speed, and technique were definitively the best among the new generation of pro players.

His only shortcoming was his playstyle: it was impulsive and self-centered, reckless and headstrong. This made him appear to be incompatible with competitive gaming.

But that was also the part that Lu Boyuan liked the most.

Judging from the cheers that could be heard even through the door and the comments spamming the barrage to the point that it lagged—the competitive arena needed this kind of pro player.

Twenty-eight minutes in, TTC effortlessly destroyed Fighting Tiger's base, winning the first round of the match.

Amidst the audience's applause and screaming, Jian Rong was the first one to take off his headphones and walk backstage.

Right as he entered the break room, Ding-*ge* greeted him with, "The world's number one Cassiopeia is indeed badass."

"Replay!! Where's the match replay?!" Xiao Bai rushed in and said, "I was buying items at the time and didn't see it! Replay it so I can watch!"

“Look at it after the match!” Ding-*ge* tugged Jian Rong back as he started making his way towards the couch. “Let’s discuss the strategy for the next game. Jian Rong, you’re definitely going to be targeted after this, can you pick a champion that you can survive on?”

Jian Rong swept a glance at Lu Boyuan and stopped in place. “Are there options?”

The intermission was very short. Before they could even finish discussing tactics, a staff member came to rush them back onstage.

Ding-*ge* stood up. “Let’s go.”

Jian Rong let out an “*en*” and suddenly remembered something. He picked up the water bottle that he took offstage with him. “Wait a moment, let me fill up my water.”

“The water dispenser is empty.” The assistant coach quickly said, “Give it to me, I’ll run next door and fill it up, it’ll be fast…”

“No need.” Lu Boyuan, who was sitting on the sofa and listening to them discuss strategy the entire time, spoke up mildly. He picked up his own thermos and said, “Coffee. I brought it from the base, but I didn’t drink that much… you don’t mind, do you? God Jian.”

A beat later, the LPL’s newly minted God Jian walked towards the stage with his teammates, holding his captain’s thermos.

Commentator A: “Alright, our players are returning to the stage—who knows if it’s because of that Cassiopeia, but now that I’m looking at Soft

again after ten minutes, it seems like he's become a little bit more handsome."

Commentator B: "Fighting Tiger still seems to be very relaxed. Veteran players are just in a different class, their mentalities aren't affected by the outcome of one game. That's pretty good."

"Soft's thermos is a new item from TTC's merch line, right? The design is quite nice." Commentator C smiled as he helped to market it. "I heard that the player's signature is printed on it too."

At that moment, Jian Rong just happened to pick up the bottle. The signature on the side of the thermos was revealed to the camera as Commentator C continued—

"See, the side is engraved with a… Road?"

The three commentators: "…"

Commentator C tried for innocence. "I'm not the one stirring up rumors this time!"

A few seconds later, he said, "…at the very least, I didn't do it on purpose!!!"

The pick/ban phase started soon after. The first thing that Fighting Tiger banned was Jian Rong's Cassiopeia.

"Respect." Xiao Bai was delighted. "God Jian, whatcha playing this round? Actually, I feel like you can still outplay, *ss*—I haven't seen your Talon on the competitive stage yet…"

Ding-*ge* lifted up his notebook and knocked him on the head again. “If Twisted Fate is available, choose that, otherwise take Orianna!”

In the end, Twisted Fate was banned by Fighting Tiger. TTC had first pick and immediately helped Jian Rong lock in Orianna.

As Ding-*ge* had predicted, Fighting Tiger realized that when playing against Jian Rong, you either had to assist each other or you had to suppress him.

But Orianna wavecleared too fast. If Da Niu left the mid lane at all, it was easy for him to be short on minions, so they could only go with the latter option.

After being ganked by the enemy jungler yet again, Jian Rong recalled to base with low health and said, “Their jungler has ganked me three times now.”

Moon: “I’ll be right there…”

“Don’t come.”

“Ah?”

“The other side is on Kassadin, you won’t be able to kill him.” Jian Rong checked the minimap and discovered that their team’s bot lane was playing very fiercely. They were suppressing the enemy under the tower once more. “Go countergank in another lane that has the advantage. Don’t come mid, they won’t be able to gank me to death anyway.”

As soon as he finished saying that, the enemy jungler arrived at the bot lane.

By now, both bot lanes had already started fighting each other, and the situation was quite unfavorable for Xiao Bai and Pine. Fortunately, they still had a fair amount of health, and their positioning was decent too. After dodging the enemy support Thresh's hook, it looked that they would be able to escape by the skin of their teeth, but then an ice arrow suddenly shot straight at Pine—the enemy ADC Ashe's ult was off cooldown.

Upon being struck by the ice arrow, judging from the distance it had traveled, he would be stunned for at least 1.5 seconds.

1.5 seconds in a situation where they were being triple-teamed was enough time for Pine to die twice.

The enemy jungler was to the left, so he couldn't shift that way, and his blink skills and flash were still on cooldown. Right as it appeared that Pine's Caitlyn was about to be finished here—

There came the sound of a flash. Xiao Bai, controlling Leona, charged over behind Pine and blocked that arrow for him!

Commentator A: "Bye helped to block it… although Leona is tanky, Bye's current level is still very low. He's most likely going to end up dying here."

Commentator B: "There's no helping it, it's always better for the support to die rather than the ADC. If Pine was killed this wave, the bot lane would explode even more."

Commentator C nodded. “That’s right. The other side also used up four Summoner Spells, so if Bye dies, it won’t be too much of a loss… hm??”

Before the commentator could finish his sentence, he watched as Pine, who was silently running for his life, instantly turn around the moment his flash came off cooldown. He flashed back through the line of minions blocking the way and decisively threw a net onto the enemy Ashe’s face!

Simultaneously, he retreated a bit because of the recoil and widened the distance between him and the enemies once again!

If struck by Caitlyn’s net, her next basic attack would trigger a headshot—with a *bang*, Pine’s headshot directly killed off the low-health Ashe!

Commentator A: “Beautiful! By exchanging a support for an ADC, TTC ends up not losing but profiting! Weren’t Pine’s mechanics way too meticulous here?!”

“That flash probably gave Fighting Tiger a scare…” Commentator B couldn’t help but laugh. “No… what’s up with TTC today? They’re all so fierce and full of outplays?”

Seeing Ashe collapse onto the ground, the already dead Xiao Bai could peacefully buy his items at last. He also didn’t forget to pitch his voice high and convey his flattery. “P-baby is so handsome! P-baby is so amazing! P-baby is a gun god! P-baby *mwah mwah mwah*!”

For a brief moment, Jian Rong thought that he had invited in a female accompanying gamer who was tagged with “*adorable little sister*” and “*sleep coaxer*,” and he nearly yanked off his headphones.

Pine also paused for a second because of Xiao Bai's kissing noises. "...don't be disgusting, buy a control ward."

"*Wuwu*, I just bought a Cloth Armor, I'm broke." Xiao Bai wavered. "Maybe I should undo it and buy the ward..."

"It's fine." Pine stiffly interrupted him, "I bought it, shut up and get in the lane."

Sensing Jian Rong and Moon's speechlessness, Yuan Qian typed in the team chat—

[TTC · Qian: This is Xiao Bai's ultimate trick for getting on the Mic Check.]

[TTC · Bye: ^3^]

Jian Rong: "....."

[TTC · Soft: Lose weight and go be an actor]

[TTC · Bye: Who are you trying to imply is fat?]

[TTC · Bye: *Wuwuwu* QvQ, P-baby he's mocking me!]

"Play the game." Pine coldly cut through their 'harmonious interaction.' "Don't bother me."

Fighting Tiger played extremely carefully this round, especially Da Niu.

It would be a lie to say that they weren't affected at all. Being 1v5'd in the semifinals, even an immortal would go into self-seclusion after that.

A period of time passed peacefully for both sides. Finally, at seventeen minutes, a team fight erupted.

Yuan Qian caught Fighting Tiger's jungler red-handed stealing the Rift Herald. Both teams swiftly rushed to the scene—

Jian Rong gave his ball to Yuan Qian's Sion, who immediately used his ult and charged forward like a speeding train—knocking the enemy top laner and jungler straight into the sky!

Jian Rong and Xiao Bai followed up with their own ults, with Pine furiously dealing damage from afar. A chaotic fight later, TTC won the team fight with no losses and three kills.

"No rush, don't chase them. Let's go for the Rift Herald and drake." Yuan Qian said, "We'll play it slow and steady, don't give Fighting Tiger any chances."

Jian Rong called back his ball and turned around to go back into the jungle.

Fighting Tiger was a team that excelled at seizing opportunities.

But TTC evidently didn't plan on giving them a sliver of a chance this time. Even Soft didn't pursue the champions with low health.

Everyone in Fighting Tiger held their breath and forcefully dragged the game out to forty-eight minutes. Da Niu encouraged his teammates in their voice chat, "Just wait, it's down to a single fight now, we can overturn it as long as we hold out until they make one mistake—"

Before he could finish, a kill announcement sounded.

While their ADC was going for one of their own monsters, he was caught and bound to the spot by Xiao Bai. Then he was killed by Pine, who was following after Xiao Bai.

At a late game disadvantage and with their carry gone, Fighting Tiger's loss was inevitable.

At forty-nine minutes and fifty-two seconds, TTC pushed Fighting Tiger's base and won the second round of the match.

…

In the third game, Fighting Tiger pulled out the strategy that they were the most proficient at—half-map support flow.

Twisted Fate was banned, but that wasn't an issue; Taliyah was also capable of providing assistance. Ashe ADC, Shen support, Gangplank top, Nocturne jungle…

In addition, Fighting Tiger didn't target the bot lane this time. Instead, they went for the top lane, and Yuan Qian was visited so often that he couldn't even leave the tower. Adding onto that, his teamwork with Moon wasn't good enough, so if Moon came, it was basically a buy one get one free. This led to the enemy top laner, Gangplank, being enormously fed in the early game—

Xiao Bai was speechless. "Their ADC has played Ashe for three games now, is he not sick of it?!"

Moon sighed. “Fighting Tiger has always been the type to do whatever it takes to win.”

Because the top lane was cleared too thoroughly in the third round, at thirty-four minutes, TTC regretfully lost the game.

Currently, the score was 2:1.

In the fourth round, Yuan Qian finally snapped.

“I’ve been pressured for three games now…”

“I know.” Ding-*ge* patted his shoulder and asked, “Can you play Irelia?”

When he said that, everyone was startled.

Every pro player had their own signature champion.

Unexpectedly, Yuan Qian, who resisted pressure every single game nowadays and acted as a tanky engager, had become well-known because of Irelia, a champion that was unparalleled in dueling and laning but was extremely weak in terms of team fighting.

Yuan Qian was also stunned. “Pick Irelia? Then who’s going to engage…”

“I’ll do it.” Xiao Bai immediately said, “I’ll take Nautilus, Moon can choose Nocturne, we can easily engage whenever we want.”

Yuan Qian: “It’s been over a year since I’ve last played Irelia in a competitive match…”

“Weren’t you playing her a lot these past few days in ranked?” Ding-*ge* asked, “Are you gonna pick her? If so, then lock her in, otherwise you can continue to bear the pressure.”

Yuan Qian went briefly silent before he clenched his teeth. “I’ll do it, I’ll fucking do it! If I don’t slaughter the other side, I won’t eat for three days!!”

Jian Rong locked in Fizz this time.

Upon seeing that, Commentator A was astonished. “Fizz… mn… last time when he played with Fizz against Fighting Tiger, the results didn’t seem to be very good.”

“He probably wants to create an advantage in the early game,” Commentator B said. “After all, Da Niu got his Orianna this time around. Da Niu’s Orianna is quite strong, they’ll have to suppress him early on… Yuan Qian picked Irelia???”

Commentator C smiled. “To tell the truth, no matter what champion TTC picks or what kind of team fight they create nowadays, I don’t feel shocked at all anymore.”

This game, the intent behind both team compositions was very clear: fast-paced versus slow-paced, let’s see who’ll be laughing in the end.

The answer to that question came quickly enough.

Seven minutes in, two kill announcements sounded in the map—

[TTC · Qian has slain ZHhubi]

[TTC · Soft has slain ZHcattle]

TTC's top and mid laners simultaneously got their solo kills!

Commentator A: "Every member of TTC has a really great feel for the game today!"

"Isn't this their usual standard?" Commentator B paused. "Fighting Tiger's jungler came to gank Qian-*ge*, but… Soft and Moon are right behind him!"

Yuan Qian also knew that he was going to be ganked soon.

Seeing that his teammates were currently hurrying towards him, he dispelled the idea of running away and continued to play pretend in his original spot.

The enemy jungler Rek'Sai broke through the ground. Yuan Qian flashed and distanced himself, forcefully buying six seconds of time under the onslaught of the other two champions' attacks—

Fizz's ult came out from the darkness, hitting the enemy top laner. Two seconds later, a shark emerged from the air, directly finishing him off.

If Irelia got the early game advantage, then nobody even had to think about playing anymore.

TTC rapidly adopted a 4-1 split push strategy—the mid laner, jungler, and bot lane duo grouped together to push the mid lane, while Yuan Qian carried the bot lane and destroyed the towers there by himself.

Fighting Tiger's top laner went to defend the turret and ended up being solo killed by Yuan Qian.

Fighting Tiger's jungler and support rushed over to assist. Yuan Qian killed off the support before he slipped into the underbrush with low health and disappeared…

Just like that, they kept grinding and grinding, all the way until the game was thirty minutes in. The inhibitor in Fighting Tiger's mid lane was still present, but the ones in the top and bot lanes had been snatched by Yuan Qian…

At thirty-four minutes, Yuan Qian flashed and used his ult, detaining two Fighting Tiger players. Jian Rong's Fizz jumped straight into the air and charged in. Without losing any of their own teammates, TTC wiped out Fighting Tiger, proclaiming their victory for this match—

However, they weren't in any rush to push Fighting Tiger's base.

Everyone still remembered how Da Niu had taunted TTC in the post-match interview—

Who said that you guys could win as long as Road wasn't here?

Who in TTC was someone "easy to deal with"?

LoL wasn't a single-player game, nor had TTC ever relied solely on the support of one person.

If Road was there, they would depend on him.

If Road wasn't there, they would take on the match together, seize the victory, and wait for him to return.

In the broadcast, the spectators watched as each member of TTC ran over to the area outside Fighting Tiger's fountain and initiated some "friendly interactions": flashing their team icon, dancing, tossing out random skills…

The scene was too chaotic, to the extent that a certain tiny figure appeared particularly out of place in comparison—

Among countless allied minions, Jian Rong's Fizz was pushing the enemy Nexus extremely painstakingly and diligently. Fizz's trident prodded again and again at the Nexus; he might as well have carved the words '*I want to win*' onto his forehead……

[Am I seeing things? Is the person obediently pushing the base my son??!]

[WTF, little dumbass whatcha doing??? You should be flashing into Fighting Tiger's base right now and using Zhonya's Hourglass OK????]

[@LPL this really isn't him! It's a fake!! How many times do I have to say it!!!]

[Has Soft gone stupid from all his climbing in the Korean server?]

[Damn, it's like he's never won before?!]

[He's become a diehard point grubber.]

…

Fighting Tiger's base was finally destroyed by Jian Rong, and TTC successfully won the semifinals with a score of 3:1.

After shaking hands and exchanging bows, the moment Jian Rong went backstage, he saw Lu Boyuan leaning against the wall next to the door, waiting.

There was a cameraman at Lu Boyuan's side as well, a staff member from their team. They were in charge of filming raw footage to be edited into a documentary later.

"*Ge*! We won!!!" Xiao Bai said excitedly.

Lu Boyuan nodded. "Mn, you guys played pretty well."

Xiao Bai: "Did you see that last engage of mine? Wasn't it super awesome? Qian-*ge*'s freaking treasured blade never becomes dull…"

Jian Rong couldn't interject a single word, and the cameraman was also nearby. As a result, he had no choice but to walk sullenly next to Lu Boyuan, chewing unhappily on the gum in his mouth and pretending that it was Xiao Bai.

Xiao Bai: "And in the second game, P-baby's flash, net toss, and headshot…"

Headshot my ass.

I'll headshot you.

Xiao Bai: “Of course, I feel like there weren’t any problems with my Leona that round at all. With me there, they still dared to think about touching P-baby? They’re dreaming…”

Lu Boyuan listened to Xiao Bai quietly as he cast a glance at the person next to him from the corner of his eye. “Did you drink all the coffee?”

Jian Rong stared blankly for two seconds before he realized that Lu Boyuan was talking to him. “No, there’s still half of it left.”

Right as he said that, Lu Boyuan took the thermos from Jian Rong’s hand. In front of their other three teammates and the camera, he very naturally twisted open the top and took a sip from it.

After he was done, he put the lid back on and said to the dumbfounded Xiao Bai, “You can continue.”

Yan: Happy birthday to God Lu ♡ sharing some more [weibo fanart] for the occasion! (these past two chapters were so long and full of gaming content 囧 I hope it sorta makes sense)

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 105: But I like you, and I don’t think that you’re cute.

Thanks to Kitty and Tinsunny for the Ko-fis~

Since they were in the middle of a match earlier, there wasn’t any room to think about other things. Only now did Xiao Bai realize—Jian Rong was using his *ge*’s thermos this entire time during the competition?!

Actually, it was quite common for those of the same gender to share drinks. Xiao Bai couldn’t really care less about that, as he himself frequently helped Pine finish off his milk tea, coffee, milk, and so on and so forth.

But his *ge* was different.

Back when they were still little stars scattered throughout a certain area of Shanghai’s rented apartments, which were even worse off than a school dorm, they all used the same stainless steel cups. One time, Kan accidentally drank from Lu Boyuan’s cup. Though his *ge* hadn’t said anything, he hadn’t touched that cup again.

To call it mysophobia was a bit excessive. He just simply wasn’t fond of his personal belongings being used by other people.

Upon discovering that the person next to him had gone mute, Lu Boyuan asked, “Not going to continue?”

Xiao Bai said, “…I’m done.”

After they returned to the break room, Ding-*ge* greeted them each with a big hug.

"Incredible." Ding-*ge* raised the phone in his hand. "I won't say anything else, I've already made a reservation at a restaurant. Although it isn't the finals yet, these are special circumstances, and everyone performed extremely well, so we have to celebrate that somehow… once the MVP interview is done, we'll head straight over. No need to practice this evening, have a good night's rest."

They were all too excited after winning the match, so the couch was completely empty. Instead, everyone stood and gathered around the doorway.

Lu Boyuan was worried that Jian Rong would be thirsty if he finished the coffee, so he handed the thermos back to him. "I didn't add much sugar, is it too bitter."

As Jian Rong took back the bottle, their fingers bumped against each other.

He said lowly, "It's not, it tastes good."

There were people surrounding them on all sides, giving them their congratulations and compliments.

After winning the semifinals, and then sharing an indirect kiss with Lu Boyuan in front of the camera, Jian Rong's heart was beating as fast as it had during the match.

Lu Boyuan was telling Moon about a few mistakes he had made while ganking the top lane in the third game.

When Lu Boyuan spoke, his Adam's apple would occasionally bob up and down. Jian Rong glanced at it a few times before he twisted open the thermos lid and finished the rest of the coffee in one gulp.

Soon, a staff member came to fetch this match's MVP for the solo interview.

In fact, they had all performed quite well during this semifinals match, and a brilliant outplay could be cut out for almost each member. Even Moon, who stepped up to the plate at the last minute, hadn't dragged the team down.

However, if they had to pick one person who played the best, even a random Bronze player would be able to definitively give the correct answer.

Two minutes later, Jian Rong appeared on the interview set.

The host couldn't help but shoot a few looks downward when he realized that Jian Rong had arrived while grasping something in his hands.

Jian Rong: "…"

He forgot to put down the thermos beforehand.

Fortunately, the host remained professional, and he wasn't as gossipy as the previous troublemaker host. As was the standard, he asked several questions concerning the match.

"Now that you just got the first penta kill of your professional career, do you feel extremely excited?"

“Mn.”

There wasn’t the slightest trace of excitement in his voice.

The host maintained his smile. “…why did you want to play Cassiopeia this time? As far as I can remember, it seems like you haven’t really played this champion too often. Could it be a secret weapon that you’ve kept hidden until now?”

“No.” Jian Rong said indifferently, “Cassiopeia relies on her teammates in the early game, and if you can’t get an advantage, there’s no way to play her. My account’s luck is bad and I don’t run into many good players in ranked. Also in matches, I’ve been playing the meta champions this entire time, which is why I haven’t really played her.”

“…”

“Then is there anything you want to say to Fighting Tiger?”

Jian Rong glanced behind him before he said, “They’ve probably already returned to their base by now, right? If I say it, can they hear me?”

“…”

The host held back his laughter and asked his last question. “Since Road didn’t play during this semifinals, were you under more pressure than you ever were in the past? We all noticed that you were playing extremely carefully and cautiously these past few games. In the last round, you were also working hard to destroy the Nexus by yourself…”

Jian Rong replied with a question of his own. “Isn’t it normal to destroy the Nexus?”

The host: “…”

If this were anyone else, it would be normal, but do you not have any clue what kind of person you are.

“It’s true that I played very carefully today. It’s the result of our training that Coach drilled into us while holding a stick in the back.” Jian Rong paused briefly. “Though, today I did indeed really want to win.”

After the interview concluded and Jian Rong left the set, his teammates were already waiting by the back door. Lu Boyuan carried Jian Rong’s equipment bag over his left shoulder and was in the middle of replying to a message on his phone.

Jian Rong was about to make his way over when a series of footsteps suddenly sounded from behind him. Before he could react, someone hooked their arm around his shoulders.

“Xiao Rong, you played so beautifully today!”

Jian Rong whipped his head around. Only then did he recall that Shiliu was also present at the stadium tonight. Since they had practice and couldn’t leave the base, he had asked Ding-*ge* to help deliver the free tickets to Shiliu.

“When you picked Cassiopeia, the fans sitting near me were even saying ‘*oh no, oh no,*’ it was so funny…” Shiliu patted his shoulder in a brotherly

fashion before he released him and smiled. “If I’m not remembering incorrectly, you used Cassiopeia to climb to rank one on the domestic server back then, right?”

“Mn.” Jian Rong headed towards his teammates. “You came by yourself?”

Shiliu followed him and shook his head. “No. Since you gave me two tickets, I brought a bro with me, but something came up last minute so he had to leave first.”

Jian Rong nodded and walked over to Lu Boyuan. He glanced at his hand first before he said, “Give me the equipment bag, I can carry it myself.”

Lu Boyuan stood there solidly without moving. He swept a look at Shiliu and asked, despite knowing the answer, “A friend?”

Shiliu was a long-time social butterfly, and he immediately extended his hand towards Lu Boyuan. “God Lu, we met at the finals last year, which I went to together with Xiao Rong… ah, I forgot that you can’t give any handshakes…”

“I remember now. It’s fine,” Lu Boyuan smiled faintly, “I can.”

Lu Boyuan’s hand was still wrapped in bandages, so they shook hands loosely.

Understanding dawned belatedly on Shiliu, and he asked, “Do you guys have a celebratory feast planned or something along those lines? If you do, I won’t go and butt in.”

“It’s not a celebratory feast.” Yuan Qian said, amused, “This is only the semifinals, what’s there to celebrate? We’re just going out to eat.”

“Okay, you guys go ahead.” Shiliu pumped his fist. “Good luck in the finals!”

Jian Rong turned his head and asked, “Then what will you do for dinner?”

Shiliu: “Don’t worry. Shanghai’s so big, I won’t starve.”

Jian Rong furrowed his brows, somewhat hesitant—Shiliu had looked after him quite a bit back when he first started streaming. Afterwards, when Shiliu visited Shanghai, Jian Rong was always the one who took him around. Now that they hadn’t seen each other in a few months, it didn’t feel right to just exchange a few words and then leave.

Lu Boyuan said, “Let’s all go eat together.”

Startled, Jian Rong looked at Lu Boyuan.

Shiliu hadn’t expected for Lu Boyuan to speak up and invite him either. “Ah? Won’t it be inconvenient…”

“There’s nothing inconvenient about it,” Ding-*ge* instantly said. “I reserved a private room, so there’s plenty of space. It’s not a problem to go together.”

In the first place, Shiliu was a very extroverted person. Since even the team’s manager had spoken, he definitely wouldn’t keep declining the offer.

The reservation Ding-*ge* made was at a famous restaurant, and they could see the river scenery from inside the private room.

“You all are allowed two small cups of alcohol today.” Ding-*ge* picked up the wine glass to illustrate his point. “Two drinks of this size, okay? You’ll be fined if you drink more than that—Xiao Lu, your hand is still injured, don’t drink anything.”

Shiliu picked up the bottle of wine, wanting to pour some for Jian Rong too. Jian Rong was about to refuse when someone blocked the opening of his glass for him. Because there were still bandages wrapped around the hand, it only hovered above the glass and didn’t actually touch it.

Lu Boyuan said, “He can’t drink that.”

Shiliu was taken aback. “No way. He can drink, he used to always order alcohol back when we ate midnight snacks together.”

Once bitten, twice shy. Jian Rong recalled the mess he had made of himself the last time he drank in front of Lu Boyuan, and he said, “I still need to practice once I get back to the base, so no thanks.”

Right as Shiliu set down the wine, Lu Boyuan feigned nonchalance as he asked, “Did you eat midnight snacks together often?”

“We ate together a lot when I used to live in Shanghai.” Shiliu said, “After I moved back to my hometown to stream, it wasn’t very easy to do so anymore.”

Most likely because Jian Rong didn’t talk a lot about himself, the other members were quite interested in this topic of conversation.

Xiao Bai was in the middle of redownloading those deleted apps. “You’ve known him for a long time then?”

“I met him at an internet cafe half a year after he first started streaming. At the time, he was only… fifteen? Or even younger?” Shiliu sighed. “I can probably say that I watched him grow up.”

Jian Rong felt like Shiliu’s words made him seem like a child. With a wooden expression, he said, “It was only a few years, so it doesn’t count.”

Shiliu laughed. “Sure, so be it. I still remember, when I saw him in the internet cafe, he was gaming while also typing and flaming someone at the same time. I was staring in awe.”

Yuan Qian: “Did he already have this hair color when you first met him?”

“No, it was black. You know, his black hair made him look especially young, which was why all the people in the stream kept thinking he was a primary school student at the beginning…”

Xiao Bai snickered. “A few days ago, a water friend also said I looked as youthful as a primary school student.”

Pine: “They were saying your mechanics were like a primary school student’s, there was no ‘*youthful*’ part. Don’t beautify your own memory.”

Men became a lot more talkative after drinking alcohol, and they started discussing topic after topic around the table.

After eating and drinking his fill, Jian Rong ducked his head and pulled out his phone to check his unread messages. There were too many, with over forty unread messages from WeChat alone. They were all from those streamers that he had added as friends but had never really talked to, congratulating him on getting into the finals.

Lu Boyuan was listening to Shiliu talk about some events that took place back when he and Jian Rong first began duo queueing and streaming together. From the corner of his eye, he noticed that Jian Rong's WeChat was filled with texts from profile pictures that contained girls all the way down.

Jian Rong clicked on the chat at the very top. He was contemplating whether to reply or not when someone's fingertips suddenly scraped lightly against the back of his neck.

Jian Rong's nape was an extremely sensitive area, and he instantly locked his phone and sat up straight.

The others were still chatting. The influence of the alcohol somewhat magnified all of their voices, and they were currently asking Yuan Qian when he was going to marry Youyou, causing the entire room to be filled with rowdy cheers.

Their chairs were placed a bit close to each other. Very naturally, Lu Boyuan propped his elbow up on the back of Jian Rong's chair and gently twisted Jian Rong's hair between his fingers where the others couldn't see. Occasionally, his fingers would also brush against the skin near the tips of Jian Rong's hair.

Lu Boyuan was extremely fond of stroking Jian Rong's hair, as it was very soft. Jian Rong's hair was short, so every time he showered he would just go ahead and wash his hair too. As a result, even though he was clearly a relatively careless little video game nerd, his hair still smelled fragrant every single day.

When Xiao Bai turned in their direction to say something, Lu Boyuan felt Jian Rong give an obvious jolt.

Lu Boyuan was amused. He didn't want Jian Rong to be too nervous, so he let go of that lock of hair.

He was about to withdraw his hand when Jian Rong suddenly leaned backwards, rubbing his hair against Lu Boyuan's index finger.

Taking advantage of his tipsiness, Xiao Bai once again asked the question that he had been curious about during the past few days. "*Ge*, who exactly is the partner you mentioned before?"

Lu Boyuan's fingers stretched into Jian Rong's hair, and he chuckled. "Take a guess."

Though Ding-*ge* said to only drink two cups, in the end some people still drank too much. Xiao Bai went back to the base while hanging off of Pine, whereas Yuan Qian directly called a car to send his girlfriend back home before returning to the base.

The only clear-headed people were the two who hadn't touched any alcohol.

Especially Jian Rong.

As he was showering in his room, he couldn't resist the urge to lower his head and knead the back of his neck. While rubbing that area, he thought—what in the world was the reward that Lu Boyuan had mentioned?

It was already eleven… had he forgotten?

If Jian Rong went to remind him, would that make him seem too fussy and demanding?

After exiting the bathroom, Jian Rong draped the towel over his head and opened his chat with Lu Boyuan on his phone. Right as he was hesitantly typing out a few words, a voice call suddenly came in.

Jian Rong swiftly answered the call. "…what's up?"

The sound of water came from Lu Boyuan's end. "What are you doing right now?"

"Just finished taking a shower."

"I'm out of shampoo." There was a bit of an echo to Lu Boyuan's voice. "Lend me some of yours?"

Jian Rong set out, carrying his personal bottle of shampoo.

Lu Boyuan's room wasn't locked. The moment he walked in, the bathroom door opened, and Lu Boyuan came out holding a hair dryer.

The fragrant scent of shower gel clung to him, and his hair was clean and straight. It was evident that he had just finished blow-drying his hair.

Jian Rong looked at the hair dryer in his hand. “Weren’t you… out of shampoo?”

Lu Boyuan reached out and closed the door before he leaned over and quickly gave him a kiss. “I was afraid that you would run into someone on the way here and wouldn’t be able to explain it, so I told you to bring it as an excuse.”

Although their rooms were only a scant distance apart, Xiao Bai liked to “sleepwalk” after he had too much to drink. He had already paced back and forth seven or eight times along the corridor earlier, while also knocking on each of their doors.

Lu Boyuan said, “Come here. I’ll help you dry your hair.”

Jian Rong subconsciously said, “Your hand…”

“I can do it with my left hand.” Lu Boyuan called again, “Come here.”

Jian Rong sat on the bed with his back to Lu Boyuan. Clearly, Lu Boyuan wasn’t very used to blow-drying someone else’s hair, and his movements were clumsy. Jian Rong’s hair turned into a complete mess after he was done.

Every time Lu Boyuan’s fingers sunk into his hair, a tingle would run down Jian Rong’s back.

As a result, even after the hair dryer was turned off, Jian Rong's breathing was still quite heavy.

At that moment, the sound of a push notification abruptly came from under a pillow. When Lu Boyuan set down the hair dryer and lifted up the pillow, Jian Rong saw the phone placed underneath it.

The push notification had already automatically disappeared. The phone screen was frozen on the video that its owner hadn't exited out of before going to shower.

Sensing that the image was a bit familiar, Jian Rong leaned forward a little. After he fully discerned what was on the screen, he looked back in astonishment and asked, "This video… where did you find it?"

It was a recording of one of Jian Rong's streams. The ID of the Cassiopeia on the screen was "*China Server's Number One Dad*." It was Jian Rong's earliest ID, but it had eventually ended up censored by Riot.

At the very least, this video was three years old. Meanwhile, his earliest stream replay saved on the streaming platform was a video from last February.

"Your Tieba." Lu Boyuan locked his phone. "I put up a post in the forum, and a fan sent me the videos that they had collected."

Since the start of Jian Rong's fourth month of streaming, that hardcore fan had saved four or five of Jian Rong's stream recordings every month.

Jian Rong was still confused. "Why are you watching these videos?"

Lu Boyuan had searched up Jian Rong's videos before. However, at the time, it was for the sake of observing Jian Rong's technique, so the videos from the past year were more than enough.

Now, trying to find videos from even earlier… it was because he wanted to see how Jian Rong had grown up by himself.

At the beginning, he was reticent and silent. When he saw a comment appear in the barrage, his eyes would light up, but after discovering that it was just an advertisement, he would lower his eyes again and sulk.

Back when he had black hair, he was indeed very well-behaved. Upon encountering girls who greeted him, he would awkwardly respond with an "*en*" or "*thank you*." He ate every meal in front of the computer: steamed buns, instant noodles, eggs. It didn't matter how disgraceful of a meal it was.

Later, once he signed a contract with the platform, he still wasn't very popular, but at least he had a base salary. Finally, he became a bit more lively—which was mainly displayed when he flamed and was flamed by LoL trolls.

After his popularity began to slightly pick up, Jian Rong's stream started to frequently be banned for five minute intervals due to reports from his own water friends. When the ban was up, he would continue to trade insults with them, and then he would end up being banned again. Currently, of the videos that Lu Boyuan had watched so far, the one with the highest record showed Jian Rong once being banned seventeen times in a single day.

Lu Boyuan rubbed his face. “I wanted to see what my boyfriend was like in the past.”

“No way.” Jian Rong remembered the expletives that he used to say in his streams, and he twisted around as he blurted out, “What’s there to see? It’s not like I was a particularly good person before.”

Lu Boyuan laughed. “Not good in what way? You were quite cute.”

“I’m a guy, what’s cute about me…”

“Who knows.” Lu Boyuan said mildly, “It’s probably because you’re the one I like, which is why I think that you’re cute.”

To someone who personally believed that he was the most badass cool guy in the world, being praised as cute truly wasn’t something worth getting very excited over.

Not even if it was coming from his boyfriend.

Jian Rong went silent for a few seconds, expressionless, before he said, “But I like you, and I don’t think that you’re cute.”

“…”

Jian Rong licked his lips. “Anyway, stop watching those videos, I really wasn’t up to any good back then. I constantly argued with my teammates, and the things I said were unpleasant too. Also, I participated in those dumbass PKs…”

Before Jian Rong could finish his sentence, Lu Boyuan tugged him onto the bed and pushed him down to kiss him.

After Lu Boyuan was done with the kiss, he turned his face to the side and huffed out a laugh. Then, he leaned down to kiss him again. He asked, “Do you not argue with your teammates anymore? Xiao Bai would be furious if he heard that.”

Jian Rong stared at Lu Boyuan’s lips and said hoarsely, “…that’s what he deserves.”

Both of their mouths tasted like the peppermint flavor from their toothpastes. Jian Rong was also more experienced now, and he hooked one arm around Lu Boyuan’s neck while he clutched at Lu Boyuan’s sheets with his other hand. He tilted his chin slightly upwards as he responded.

The bed was filled with Lu Boyuan’s scent, and Jian Rong inevitably recalled what they did here last time. He reacted even faster than he had any time before.

When Lu Boyuan reached out and touched his waist, Jian Rong trembled.

As he was closing his eyes, he suddenly thought of something. With a quiver, Jian Rong instantly grabbed onto Lu Boyuan’s shirt. “Hang on…”

He stared at the bandages on Lu Boyuan’s hand. His face bright red, he said nervously, “Don’t do it, you still can’t move your hand yet.”

“It won’t affect it.”

“It will!!” No matter what, Jian Rong wasn’t willing to back off, and he started to prop himself up.

Lu Boyuan pressed him back down.

He said, “It’s not like I only have hands.”

Jian Rong’s pajama pants were very loose. With one tug, they fell with no force needed.

Jian Rong didn’t understand, all the way up until Lu Boyuan ducked his head and shifted downwards…

The moment he made contact, the area around Jian Rong’s tailbone immediately tingled. His entire body arched up as he unconsciously grabbed hold of Lu Boyuan’s hair. “Don’t… don’t do that…”

Clang.

The sound of a door opening came from outside the room—Xiao Bai was out once again to “sleepwalk.”

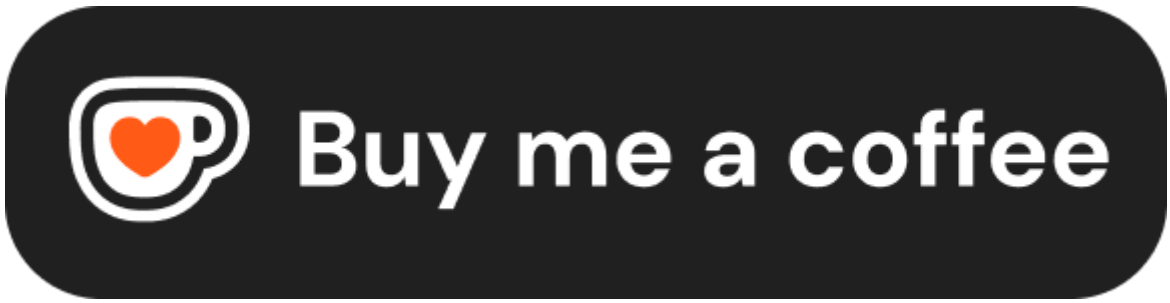
Upon hearing Xiao Bai knock on his own door and ask foolishly if he wanted to go down and eat breakfast together, goosebumps erupted all over Jian Rong’s body.

Lu Boyuan didn’t stop.

Jian Rong wanted to let out his voice, but at the same time, he didn’t dare to. He felt like he was about to fall apart.

A few seconds later, he snatched up a random pillow next to him and bit down onto it.

Wei: I'm back!!! And done with finals!!! What a thrilling chapter to return to ahhhh ::blushing::



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ICDI Chapter 106: .

Minor NSFW in first half of the chapter!

Xiao Bai felt like his head was about to explode, and his stomach wasn't feeling very good either. As a self-acknowledged little fatty, he instinctively thought that it was because he was hungry.

Xiao Bai slumped against Jian Rong's door and knocked on it for quite a while. Because he didn't get a response, he kept mumbling unceasingly away—

"Jian Rong ah—

"Rong~ are you there~

"God Jian? Open your door.

"The world's number one Cassiopeia? Pay some attention to me.

"Do you want to eat breakfast or not?"

Two doors opened nearby, and Yuan Qian poked his head out of his room first. He was currently on the phone with his girlfriend, Youyou, and after she said something on the other end, he instantly straightened up and explained, "What woman? How could I possibly bring a woman back to the base and let her sleep here! Wouldn't Ding-*ge* murder me if he found out?! Of course, I don't have any other women…

“That’s Xiao Bai’s voice, can’t you tell? It sounds girly? This is how his voice normally sounds, okay… I’ll get closer so you can listen to it. He’s probably drunk, me? I’m definitely not, you were sitting right next to me, I would hardly dare to drink a lot…”

Pine leaned against his door, watching Zhuang Yibai throw a drunken fit. He had just finished showering, so he was still a little damp, and he was only wearing a pair of long pants with a towel draped around his neck. Upon hearing the noise outside, he had come out to take a look only because he thought that Jian Rong would finally snap and beat up Xiao Bai.

“Even if you don’t wanna eat, you still shouldn’t ignore me, right? You’re the world’s best Cassiopeia, you gotta have some manners.” Xiao Bai’s entire face was pressed against Jian Rong’s door, and he turned his head slowly to the side. It took him a few seconds to recognize the person standing nearby, but then he called out softly, “P-baby, *hic*—”

Pine watched him and asked, “What are you throwing a fit for?”

With reddened eyes, Xiao Bai said in a small voice, “…I don’t feel very good, P-baby.”

Pine looked at him for a long moment before he let out a deep sigh. As he went over to Xiao Bai to support him, he said calmly, “Who told you to drink so much?”

Xiao Bai bent over a bit, causing his hair to rub vigorously against Pine’s neck. “*Wu*, can you not hold me there underneath my armpit, it’s so ticklish.”

Pine froze. “…don’t wrap your arm so tightly around my neck.”

The hot and cold conversation trickled in intermittently from outside the door. In the middle, there were a few more thuds as someone accidentally bumped into a door, before everything fell back into silence at last.

Jian Rong’s legs were bent, and the bottom of his shirt was tugged up to his chest. His skin was scaldingly red.

His fingers were tangled in Lu Boyuan’s hair, but since he was afraid of hurting Lu Boyuan, he didn’t dare to use force. His other hand clutched Lu Boyuan’s pillow and used it to cover his face, as if that way he wouldn’t be able to hear the noises coming in from outside.

His pulse throbbed in his throat. After covering his eyes, the only thing left in his world was Lu Boyuan. The pillow was covered with Lu Boyuan’s scent, and Lu Boyuan was breathing quite heavily through his nose. Whenever the bandages on his hand occasionally brushed against Jian Rong, he would let out a low, muffled grunt from beneath the pillow.

A moment later, Jian Rong’s legs tensed uncontrollably, and he unconsciously arched his waist slightly. In a flash of panic, he wanted to push Lu Boyuan away, but he wasn’t successful. Instead, Lu Boyuan gripped his wrist and held it in place—

After a long while, Jian Rong finally realized that he was forcefully pressing his ankles into Lu Boyuan’s back.

He frantically relaxed his legs as he tossed aside the pillow and sat up halfway. He started to ask Lu Boyuan if he had hurt him.

Then, he saw Lu Boyuan pull out a tissue from nearby before he lowered his head and wiped his mouth with it.

Jian Rong was dumbfounded. His entire face was hot, but he didn't know what to say. A few seconds passed before he swiftly went to get a few more tissues, wanting to help Lu Boyuan wipe his mouth. With his hand halfway through the air, he was stopped again by Lu Boyuan.

Jian Rong's eyes were very glassy, and his face was red too. Anyone who saw him would know exactly what he was just doing.

Lu Boyuan pressed Jian Rong's hand down to the side as he tilted his head and leaned in.

Lu Boyuan asked him lowly, "Are you satisfied with your reward?"

"…"

When their lips were about to touch, Lu Boyuan paused before shifting downwards to kiss his chin instead. But then Jian Rong directly threw his arms around his neck and kissed him on the mouth.

It was a charged and passionate kiss.

After kissing for some time, Lu Boyuan got up to brush his teeth. Lying on the bed, Jian Rong's entire head was full of—

Did I deserve that.

That felt so good.

Should I start working out, every time I'm so weak that I'm no match for my boyfriend, isn't that kinda bad?

That felt so good.

Zhuang Yibai really is a dumbass.

That felt so good.

In the first place, Lu Boyuan being his partner was already enough to end him, and then he had to go and do it this way too.

Jian Rong closed his eyes and rubbed them vigorously. His lower back was still a little numb. He picked up his phone, wanting to extend his greetings to Xiao Bai in the group chat, but when he looked up and saw the time, he suddenly felt like something wasn't quite right—

Wasn't Lu Boyuan in the bathroom for too long?

The buzzing of the electric toothbrush had stopped a while ago. At that moment, the bathroom was extremely quiet, with almost no sound coming from it.

Jian Rong's brain worked extremely fast. After he realized what was going on, he stared at the ceiling for a little before he abandoned his phone and jumped off the bed to knock on the bathroom door.

It took approximately four or five seconds for Lu Boyuan to respond to him. "What's wrong."

His voice was deep and low, carrying an echo from the bathroom.

Jian Rong said, “I need to use the toilet.”

“…” The bathroom went silent for a while again. “One moment.”

“Right now.” Jian Rong leaned against the wall next to the bathroom door. “It’s urgent, super urgent, I can’t hold it in any longer.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Then go back to your room first.”

Jian Rong replied instantly, “No way, I can’t walk.”

Several seconds later, the brief sound of rushing water came from inside.

Lu Boyuan washed his hands and pushed open the door. “Go ahead.”

He was about to walk away when Jian Rong reached out and hugged him. He scooted closer and sniffed at Lu Boyuan’s mouth; the peppermint smell was back.

Before Lu Boyuan could say anything, Jian Rong inclined his head to the side and buried his face in the curve of Lu Boyuan’s neck. Then he kissed Lu Boyuan’s Adam’s apple.

They were nearly pressed completely against each other.

Jian Rong said, “You’re poking me, boyfriend.”

As soon as he said that, he felt Lu Boyuan’s throat bob.

Jian Rong continued, “I know how to do it too, I’ll help you.”

Lu Boyuan kneaded his neck. A long pause later, he asked huskily, "…what do you know how to do?"

"I pick up things very quickly." Jian Rong cast his eyes downward and added, "Everything you did, I know how to do now."

Immediately, Lu Boyuan pressed a hand against his forehead and half-forced him to lift his head.

There wasn't any resistance or reluctance on Jian Rong's face. He was simply a hot-blooded young man who had just started dating and wanted to do all sorts of things with his lover.

Which was why Jian Rong didn't avoid him. Instead, he stared into Lu Boyuan's eyes and asked, "Do you prefer standing or lying down?"

—in order to sound a bit more manly, he voiced it in the same manner as if he were asking, "*Do you prefer Lee Sin or do you prefer Graves?*"

Lu Boyuan didn't pick either option.

He sat the head of his bed, his hand half-curled as he twirled Jian Rong's hair between his fingertips. Once in a while, he would pinch Jian Rong's ear.

Jian Rong was actually lying earlier; like hell he knew how to do anything. Throughout the entire process, he had kept his face buried in the pillow like an ostrich. He hadn't even looked at a single strand of hair on Lu Boyuan's head, so what did he know?

Lu Boyuan still ended up having to teach him.

“Don’t rush.

“Teeth.”

A long time later: “Sore? Rest for a while.”

For the sake of doting on his boyfriend, Jian Rong threw himself into the pit.

After rinsing his mouth, Jian Rong sprawled out across the bed, exhausted. While sitting and answering texts, Lu Boyuan massaged Jian Rong’s jaw with his free hand, wanting to help him relax a little. As he kneaded away, he lowered his head to kiss him again.

Once the peck of a kiss finished, Jian Rong asked faintly, “What time is it?”

Lu Boyuan: “Two-thirty.”

Jian Rong: “…”

Jian Rong shot upright and ruffled his hair before he said indistinctly, “I’ll go back to my room to sleep.”

Lu Boyuan grabbed onto his shirt as he set down his phone. “Sleep over here tonight?”

Startled, Jian Rong blurted out, “If we’re seen…”

Lu Boyuan said, “It’s hardly that easy to run into someone.”

Jian Rong blinked. It was true that he very rarely encountered his teammates when he got up. After all, they didn’t have a fixed time by which

they had to log on…

Lu Boyuan said, “After we wake up, we can go down to practice together.”

Jian Rong frowned. “You aren’t allowed to use your hand until the day after tomorrow.”

Lu Boyuan nodded and said, “Then I’ll sit next to you and watch you play.”

Jian Rong: “…”

“Your shirt is wet.” Lu Boyuan asked, “I can give you one of mine?”

Jian Rong turned his head. He hesitated and internally debated for a few seconds before he finally said, “…pick one with short sleeves.”

Jian Rong was actually quite tired today. He had played in a BO5 match, eaten a celebratory feast, received a reward, and then doted on his boyfriend.

The air conditioning was on in Lu Boyuan’s room. He changed into Lu Boyuan’s clothing and instantly closed his eyes after getting under the blanket.

Upon hearing the sound of his own livestream replay, Jian Rong murmured quietly, “Why’re you still watching it.”

Lu Boyuan played with his hair. “It’s the last five minutes, I’ll turn it off once I’m done.”

Jian Rong mumbled, “That’s not it… I didn’t think you were being loud.”

After doing some very intimate things together, Jian Rong had mostly given up on bothering anymore.

Rather than letting those water friends cause trouble later by embellishing and making up details, it would be better for Lu Boyuan to watch it himself.

In any case, this was just the kind of person he was. Before, he had an irritable temper and liked to flame others, and he was no different now. The only change was that his profanity had lessened a little, but he still didn't have a particularly nice temperament.

Lu Boyuan continued to sit on the bed, with Jian Rong sleeping at his side. They shared the same body temperature.

Seeing the little black-haired Jian Rong on the screen pull up a game replay from many years ago while chewing on a steamed bun, Lu Boyuan's heart went soft and aching. He lowered his gaze, wanting to say something, only to discover that Jian Rong had already fallen asleep.

Jian Rong's mouth fell slightly open in his slumber. His lips were still a bit red, and his forehead was pressed against the side of Lu Boyuan's leg.

Lu Boyuan turned off his phone and laid down next to him. Then, he reached out and gently drew Jian Rong into his embrace.

The next day, when Jian Rong woke up, Lu Boyuan was already on his phone.

Jian Rong half-narrowed his eyes before he shut them for a while longer, until both of their phones chimed simultaneously.

[Ding-*ge*: What's going on, huh? Is the entire base empty? It's almost two PM and not a single person is out of bed yet?! Aren't you guys slacking off a little too much???]

[Yuan Qian: I ended up chatting late with Youyou last night… I'm up, I'll come down as soon as I brush my teeth.]

[Ding-*ge*: I asked Auntie to make breakfast, after you're done brushing your teeth go and knock on the other members' doors too. I have to go out to take care of something.]

[Yuan Qian: OK.]

At that point, Jian Rong sat bolt upright in bed. He gathered up his clothing in a fluster and got ready to head back to his own room.

Lu Boyuan looked at him from behind, as that strong feeling of having a secret love affair bubbled up again. He laughed and said lazily, "The shampoo."

Jian Rong's footsteps paused for a moment before he doubled back and picked up his shampoo. "I'm going back now."

"Mn." Lu Boyuan said, "Let me know when you're done washing up."

As Jian Rong opened the door, he turned his head back to reply with an "*en*." When he faced forward again, he met Xiao Bai's gaze.

Xiao Bai came out from Pine's room, looking like he was hungover. Halfway through a yawn, he spotted Jian Rong and ended up swallowing the yawn

back down.

Jian Rong: "……"

Xiao Bai: "……"

They stared quietly at each other for a while.

Jian Rong was only stunned for a second before he immediately questioned preemptively, remaining calm in the face of danger, "Why are you coming out from Pine's room?"

"I got drunk last night, so he was taking care of me…" Xiao Bai stopped and finally sensed that something was off. He frowned and asked, "No, shouldn't I be the one asking you that?! How come you're leaving my *ge*'s room?"

Jian Rong lifted the object in his hand and said, "He's out of shampoo. I went to give him some."

Xiao Bai looked up. "Why's your hair so messy?"

Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow. "I didn't brush it after I woke up, got a problem?"

Xiao Bai kept pressing the issue. "…then how come you're wearing my *ge*'s shirt?"

Jian Rong continued to make up lies. "I happened to go in just as he was washing his hair, so my shirt got wet."

Xiao Bai blinked. "But your own room is only a few steps away."

Jian Rong: "…"

Jian Rong lowered his eyelids, his expression extremely dark. "I was pissed about getting drenched, so I made him compensate me with a shirt, is that not allowed?!"

After he said that, Jian Rong heard the person inside the room chuckle. Jian Rong turned his head. "Don't you laugh!"

Lu Boyuan nodded and tousled Jian Rong's hair on his way into the bathroom. "I won't laugh."

Xiao Bai still felt like something wasn't right, but he didn't have the guts to keep asking questions. "Fine, my *ge* really is too much. You went to give him shampoo out of the kindness of your heart, and he even got you dirty, how is one shirt enough compensation? In any case, my *ge* has money, you tell him to compensate you with two shirts!"

Lu Boyuan, who had been eavesdropping for some time in the bathroom, responded with a "*sure*." There was a trace of smile in his voice.

Jian Rong felt like he must be a dumbass to stand here and bicker with Zhuang Yibai for so long. Carrying his clothes, he strode back into his own room.

After breakfast, Jian Rong only found out that his name had gotten on the Weibo hot search last night when he started streaming and read the barrage.

His 1v5 outplay yesterday had been clipped into a video by a certain big esports account, and Savior, Kongkong, and many other pro players had reposted the video. All their captions were, without exception, things like "*strong*" and "*GOAT*[1]." By now, the post had already been forwarded 30,000 times.

Lu Boyuan had also forwarded it. His accompanying caption was a simple "*my mid laner*."

Jian Rong's heart swelled when he saw that. He locked his phone and once again wore an extremely haughty expression.

He said to the barrage, "No need to say anything else, all you have to do is spam '*badass*.'

"Fighting Tiger did make mistakes in that wave, but does that negate the fact that your dad is super strong?

"Scripts? Yes, I was scripting. Not only was I scripting, I've been hacking the LPL… all the competitive leagues… this entire game."

The barrage was densely packed, and for once, it was filled with compliments. Jian Rong answered whatever comment he was able to read.

Suddenly, a comment that seemed particularly out of place slid across the screen—

[Ahhhhhhh, twenty seconds ago I saw a rumor on Weibo that Road has a partner now, is it real?!!!]

Right as that comment was posted, many more instantly followed suit—

[What kinda nonsense is that? I don't believe it!!!]

[How is that possible? Though it's normal for Road to date at his age, he's in practice every day, and he's had a pretty serious hand injury lately too. He probably even has to cram in the time to recover, where would he get the energy to date from.]

[My husband didn't play in one single match. Those gossip accounts, don't stir up drama about him, if you don't mind.]

[Ahhh then does that mean I still have a chance T-T?! I already bought tickets for the finals, I wanna sneak backstage and forcefully kiss my husband—]

[I don't believe it.]

Jian Rong shot a glance towards the door.

Ding-*ge* had whisked Lu Boyuan away to discuss business, so he wasn't here yet.

"You don't have a choice but to believe it," he said.

Amidst the countless question marks in the barrage, Jian Rong said, "He does have a partner now."

He opened the game. Two seconds later, he added, "His partner doesn't have a good temper, so to the person who just said you were going to forcefully kiss him… you better be careful."

—

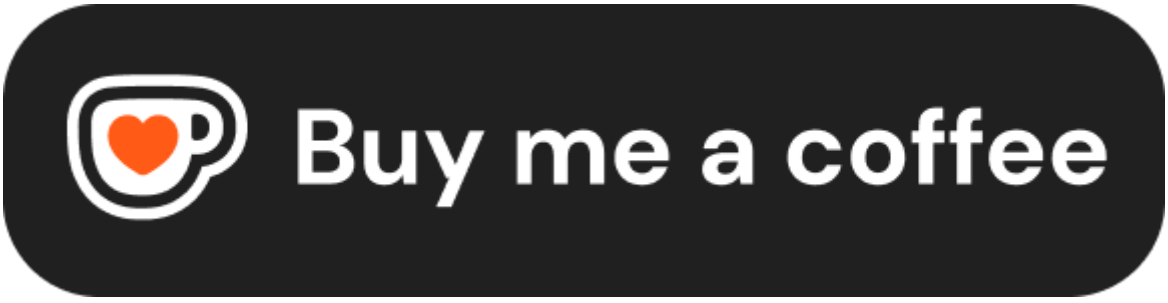
The author has something to say:

He really doesn't have a good temper, okay.

Translation Notes

1. *Obviously they don't actually say GOAT here (abbreviation for greatest of all time) but it was a slang in Chinese that basically meant the same thing. Kudos to Wei for remembering this phrase existed lmao* ^

Yan: Lol so this is the first of the censored chapters and probably one of the ones that she had to censor the most? I exercised many translator liberties here and cobbled together this chapter from the updated version in jjwxc and the original pre-censored version. As a result... this frankenstein chapter was born. But I figured people would probably want the horny bonk so here we are, you're welcome.



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ICDI Chapter 107: It’s fine as long as I like it.

The doctor came to the base. After the check-up, he said that Lu Boyuan was recovering quite well, and that he could resume training tomorrow. The finals match in a few days wouldn’t be a problem either, with the precondition being that he had to pay attention to how much he practiced.

Lu Boyuan switched out his bandages for new ones. When he entered the practice room, Xiao Bai was in the middle of gaming and interrogating Jian Rong at the same time—

“How do you know that my *ge*’s partner has a bad temper?

“Do you know who his partner is?

“You’re going a little too far, you know. Even if my sister-in-law’s temper really isn’t good, you can’t just say it out loud in the stream. I’m betting when the time comes you won’t be able to drink our new sister-in-law’s love soup.”

The practice room door was left wide open, so nobody realized that Lu Boyuan had entered.

Jian Rong looked at the “*hahahas*” and various questions being sent in the barrage. Through gritted teeth, he said, “There is no love soup.”

“But what if?”

“There are no what ifs, *laozi*… that person doesn’t know how.”

“No way, you really do know her?” Xiao Bai paused. “It’s fine if she doesn’t know how, Youyou-*jie* didn’t know how to make it either before she got together with Qian-*ge*. In the end, didn’t she still end up learning how to cook out of love.”

Jian Rong rolled his eyes and ignored him.

Yuan Qian interjected, “But Captain’s hand has been injured for so long, how come his partner hasn’t come to the base to check in on him.”

Xiao Bai wanted to loudly shout ‘*sister-in-law is neglecting her duties*,’ but taking into consideration the fact that Jian Rong was streaming, he coughed and said, “That’s actually…”

However, even though he didn’t finish the sentence, it was enough to anger Lu Boyuan’s fans—

[…it’s over. From the sound of that, it looks like Road really is dating.]

[Not being the least bit concerned about your boyfriend’s injury, and also being solidly labeled as having a bad temper by a teammate, is Road dating a buddha?]

[Is it Tang Qin? But she seems to be fairly good-tempered, isn’t she?]

[Just checked his match history… Road hasn’t been playing these past few days, and before that, if he wasn’t solo Q’ing, then he was playing with his teammates. Don’t tell me that his partner isn’t someone in the circle?]

[I hope that pro players can concentrate on their jobs and not be affected by other people or things. Lastly, I don't acknowledge this sister-in-law.]

Who gives a damn if you acknowledge it or not, it's not like you're the one dating him.

Just as that thought crossed Jian Rong's mind, he heard the sound of chair wheels rolling across the floor. He turned his head and saw Lu Boyuan drag his chair over with one hand before he sat down a bit behind him.

Jian Rong was momentarily startled. He thought that Lu Boyuan was just joking last night when he said he was going to sit next to him and watch him play…

Lu Boyuan said considerately, "Practice what you need to practice, don't mind me."

Upon hearing Lu Boyuan's voice, the viewers immediately started spamming the barrage, telling Jian Rong to turn on his camera.

Jian Rong hadn't planned to turn it on in the first place. Now that Lu Boyuan was here, he definitely wasn't going to do so, in case these people started to make up rumors again when they saw the bandages wrapped around Lu Boyuan's hand.

Normally, Jian Rong sat in an atypical manner, as his chair was always further away from his computer than other people's were. He scooted his chair forward a little. "…can you see? Sit a bit closer."

The barrage was spamming question marks again—actually, nobody could see anything, and at first listen, there was nothing wrong with that sentence either.

But the water friends' intuition was sharp, and they kept feeling like something was fishy.

Lu Boyuan laughed and moved to sit slightly closer.

He looked at the barrage and asked, "What did you say to them earlier?"

"I made it known," Jian Rong entered solo queue, "...that you have a partner."

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. "Wasn't I the one who made it known first?"

This could be considered a direct admission. The stream's barrage instantly exploded—there were those who couldn't accept it and those who said that Lu Boyuan wasn't dedicating himself to his career, as well as a small handful of people giving him their blessings.

Jian Rong felt annoyed reading a few of the comments, but those people all claimed to be Lu Boyuan's fans, so it wasn't his place to scold them. He decided to just shift his mouse with the intention of closing the barrage entirely.

Lu Boyuan's elbow was propped up on the armrest of Jian Rong's chair. Noticing his small movements, Lu Boyuan raised a hand and briefly kneaded the back of Jian Rong's neck, as if he were petting a cat. "No need to close it, let me chat with them for a while."

While Jian Rong was hesitating, he finally matched into a game.

Lu Boyuan checked his wait time. “The queue was that long? What rank are you now.”

“43.” In the end, Jian Rong didn’t close the barrage. He recalled something and said woodenly, “I was 42 yesterday, but I was surpassed after the match.”

Countless incongruous comments saying “*badass*” and “*666*” slid across the barrage, which was still vehemently discussing the fact that Lu Boyuan had a partner.

Jian Rong was undoubtedly the fastest climbing pro player that they had ever seen. He was even faster than Master, who had made his way up to rank one some time ago.

Lu Boyuan let out an “*en*” and praised naturally, “Very impressive.”

[?]

[This coaxing a child tone of voice? My misperception?]

[Are you really dating are you really dating are you really dating??]

Lu Boyuan said, “I am dating.”

Jian Rong’s hand shook, and he accidentally clicked on Teemo’s picture. He received a bemused “?” in return from Doufu, who had matched into the same game as him.

Jian Rong calmly changed his preselected champion to LeBlanc. Internally, he thought, *My rank is so high, why do I still keep crashing cars with this dumbass*.

Seeing Lu Boyuan acknowledge his relationship casually and easily, the fans stopped for a moment and ended up calming down instead.

Jian Rong was only wearing his headphones over one ear, and he silently listened to Lu Boyuan chat with the water friends.

“We haven’t been dating for long.

“Who is it… I’m not going to say anything for the time being, I don’t want them[1] to be affected.

“Who did the chasing… of course it was me.

“Are they good-looking? Yes.”

When Lu Boyuan said that last part, Jian Rong sensed him glance in his direction, and he swiftly licked his lips.

A very lengthy comment rapidly slid across the barrage—[You genuinely like her? To the point that you’re willing to waste practice time to date her? Can’t you just date in a few years after you retire???]

Upon seeing the word “*retire*,” Jian Rong couldn’t help but say, “Dumbass, if you don’t know how to speak, then shut up…”

Lu Boyuan said, “I cannot.”

As the fans and Jian Rong were stunned, he continued, “Dating won’t affect my practice time or my competitive performance. Currently, it doesn’t seem like it’s affected the other person’s… work either. With a circumstance like this, why should I wait?

“A pro player can’t date? They have to be single until they retire? The LPL has no such rule.”

He said lazily, “Also, the other person might not necessarily be willing to wait until I retire. After all, there are so many people who like them…”

Jian Rong was in the middle of ganking the bot lane when Lu Boyuan said that. Because of the last part, Jian Rong was a bit belated in using his skill, and Doufu ended up getting the kill.

Doufu was shocked—Soft actually let him have the kill!!!

Elation aside, he put on a reserved and aloof air as he typed in the chat: [*Thx*.]

Except Jian Rong didn’t pay any attention to him whatsoever. He immediately hit B and recalled to base.

[Damn? Why do I feel like God Lu is showing off?!!!]

[I also feel that!! A woman’s keen sixth sense is telling me that his partner is definitely in the stream right now!!! What’re you all spacing out for, go find her, my bros!!]

[If she really is here, then isn't that way too sweet T-T I don't care I'm just gonna pretend that I'm that mysterious partner.]

[On the bright side… at least Road does indeed like the bad-tempered type. More or less, that means he likes people similar to my son…]

[So does that person really actually have a bad temper? Bad to the point that even your teammates know about it?!]

God Jian's minion clearing slowed ever so slightly.

"Their temper…" Lu Boyuan held back a smile. "It's fine as long as I like it."

[I feel like I just lost my love and was fed fluff at the same time. Why am I so conflicted?]

[I'm not listening, I'm not listening! I'm going to act as if I didn't come to the dumbass' stream today! I don't care Road and Soft are locked in together forever!! No woman can squeeze her way in between them!!!]

[Since you made this choice, then you can bear the consequences yourself when you're flamed for being trash in future matches.]

[At the above "rational fan," thank you for your concern, but God Lu has indeed been playing better and better in the recent matches. There's no need for you to worry.]

Soft's dad fans observed the show from the sidelines, but they didn't think anything much of Lu Boyuan using Jian Rong's stream as a press conference—he was obviously here to increase the stream traffic. Xiao Bai, who was

sitting nearby, could only dream about carrying Road over to his own stream.

Some dad fans even started breezily sending sarcastic comments—

[So what if her temper is bad? You young folk don't understand, it's more interesting to be with someone who's ill-tempered.]

[I also really want to give my son a scolding because of this type of thing. Unfortunately, this dumbass has no affinity with women. Every so often, a young women will add him as a friend, and he'll just ask them 'why'd you add me, wanna solo']

[Didn't he say that he had someone he liked last time? But since there still hasn't been any updates on that in so long, he was probably rejected, right:)]

[In my opinion, all the Road fans should accept the situation and move on. No matter how bad your sister-in-law's temper is, can it be as bad as my son's???]

Jian Rong: "…"

Lu Boyuan's rapid fire Q&A lasted for less than half an hour before it was cut short by Ding-*ge*, who caught wind of the news and came armed for battle.

Ding-*ge* finally realized something—although Lu Boyuan said on the surface that he wasn't going to make their relationship public, from that point on, he had started to continuously lay down the foundation.

First, he announced that he was dating. Then, he emphasized that he was the one doing the chasing and that neither of their careers had been affected…

Ding-*ge* called him out into the hallway and condensed all his various thoughts into one sentence. "Young master, whenever you plan on coming out of the closet, can you please let me know in advance? At least give me a chance to inform public relations about their impending struggle at death's door…"

"There's no need for that." Lu Boyuan played on his phone. "What time does the match start this afternoon?"

The other semifinals match was being held today. PUD was facing off against this season's "little dark horse," KUG.

The winning team would become TTC's opponent and would stand together with them on the stage for the spring season finals.

At 6:30 in the evening, TTC's living room coffee table was covered with dishes. The entire team, including the two substitutes, sat in front of the TV, waiting to watch this pivotal match.

Yuan Qian stuffed some food into his mouth. "Who do you guys think will win?"

"PUD." Xiao Bai responded instantaneously. "In any case, when I was playing against KUG, I didn't think it was all that hard."

As a new team that had just joined the LPL two years prior, it was indeed impressive that KUG could advance to the semifinals.

But part of that was still due to luck. After narrowly beating MFG, they got placed into good brackets, and nearly all the strong teams were on the other side.

Xiao Bai looked back and asked, "*Ge*, what are your thoughts?"

Lu Boyuan was about to say something when his phone suddenly rang.

He glanced at the caller ID, and a trace of surprise flashed through his eyes. He tossed behind an "*answering this call*" before he got up and walked towards the balcony.

The living room chatted away noisily for a while longer. The broadcast finally started, and the familiar faces of the commentators appeared on the screen.

The moment Jian Rong lifted his head, he saw Commentator A listen attentively to something being said in his headset as he went entirely still for about three seconds.

"Ah… er, there's some news that I have to share with everyone." Commentator A licked his lips. "I just received notice that due to a relapse of XIU's injury, PUD will be sending out their substitute jungler for tonight's match…"

Yuan Qian froze mid-chew. "Oh shit."

“Oh man.” Hezi, who was on his phone the entire time, abruptly looked up. “I came across this Weibo that says… there’s an ambulance parked at the back door of the stadium.”

“An ambulance?” Xiao Bai was astonished. “Doesn’t XIU have a hand injury? It – it can’t be that bad, right…”

“It’s far worse than just a hand injury.” Ding-*ge* sighed. “As far as I know, XIU has the most serious injuries out of all the older pro players. He has problems all over his body… where are you going?”

Jian Rong didn’t bother turning his head. “I’m full, I’m going to get some air.”

Before Jian Rong even reached the balcony, he caught the scent of cigarette smoke.

Lu Boyuan leaned against the railing, a cigarette hanging from his mouth. His head was lowered as he looked at a certain group chat in WeChat.

His eyelids were lowered, and there was an impassive look in his eyes. Though a chunk of white ash had already been burnt out at the end of his cigarette, he hadn’t taken the time to shake it off.

Hearing noise, Lu Boyuan glanced behind him before he removed the cigarette from his mouth and started to say something.

But then Jian Rong shifted closer to him and brushed their lips together. Immediately after, he choked a bit on the taste of smoke.

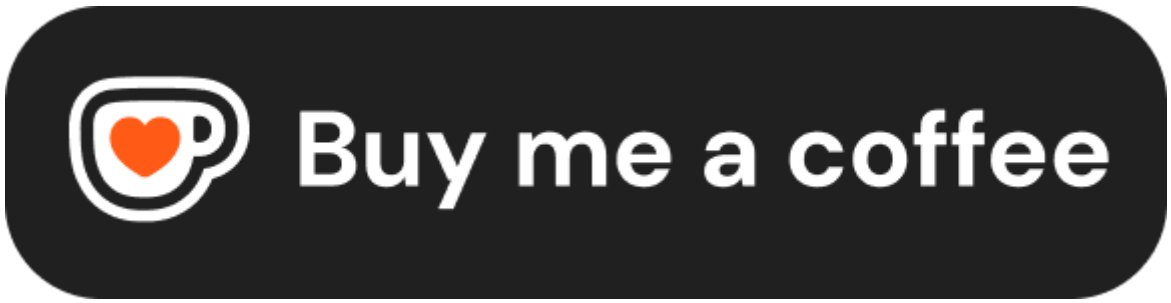
Jian Rong couldn't really pinpoint why he wanted to kiss him at that moment.

It was probably because his heart was aching for Lu Boyuan's sake, and he wanted to comfort him, but at the same time, he couldn't come up with a better method.

After the very brief kiss ended, Jian Rong asked quietly, "What's wrong?"

Translation Notes

1. *Lu Boyuan says 'him' here but since pronouns in Chinese sound the same out loud, the fans don't know that, so I switched it to 'them'* ^



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ICDI Chapter 108: Normally people wouldn’t act like this, right??

Thanks to Somebody and L for the Ko-fis!

Lu Boyuan very rarely expressed his feelings to other people, including back when he first joined the LPL and faced off against some pro players who lacked character and morals. Oftentimes, he wouldn’t even spare them a single look, and once he crushed them in the competitive arena, he wouldn’t bother wasting unnecessary words on them.

He displayed even less any emotions that went deeper than that.

He looked at Jian Rong. The teenager was just saying earlier that day in his stream how his temper was very bad, but at that current moment, it was as if the moon had fallen into his eyes.

A long pause later, Lu Boyuan spoke. “It seems like XIU won’t be able to play anymore.”

This time, XIU’s waist injury had relapsed.

While he was sitting in the break room waiting for the match to start, he had suddenly felt a pain in his lower back. After that, he couldn’t stand up again.

Waist injuries were the hardest to treat, and even the doctor accompanying the team didn’t dare to carelessly touch it. Although XIU kept saying that

they didn't need to worry about him and he'd be fine as long as he sat for a bit, the coach still ended up decisively calling an ambulance.

In the end, XIU was lifted into the ambulance on a stretcher. At the same time, he was on the phone with Lu Boyuan, and he had laughed as he said that the two of them were brothers in hardship; neither of them deserved to play in the semifinals this year.

Their veteran pro player group chat was very lively, the same as it had been the night of TTC's semifinals match.

XIU's voice messages came in one after another, and the chat only quieted down later after he was sent off for an examination.

Out of all the LPL pro players, Lu Boyuan had known XIU for the longest. Though they weren't in the same team and didn't contact each other very often, their friendship had never faded. Even including the veteran pro players who had already retired in this group chat, they were all still good brothers who helped each other out whenever someone needed it.

Jian Rong leaned against the railing. "Weren't his injuries already pretty severe before this? He's already persevered for so long, this time…"

Lu Boyuan said, "Their team's management has been wanting to bring in someone new for a while now."

Jian Rong paused. "That substitute jungler?"

"Mn."

Jian Rong had encountered that substitute jungler in ranked before.

PUD's criteria for signing pro players was that they had to be strong, and that jungler was the rookie jungler who had the greatest publicity as of late in the LPL. In a previous match, he had used Lee Sin to accomplish a 1v2 outplay, so some esports fans even started to jokingly refer to him as "the next Road."

Of course, the fans of that jungler were very opposed to this title.

As a Road fan, Jian Rong didn't like this title either.

Jian Rong rationally analyzed the situation briefly: even though XIU's playstyle was more stable than that substitute's and was better in the late game, it seemed like his mechanics weren't as good as the newcomer's.

As a result, he thought a bit and said, "It's fine, XIU is popular. He can still make money if he streams after he retires."

Lu Boyuan: "..."

Jian Rong: "He can also open a Taobao shop and sell snacks, though I think it isn't very profitable to sell snacks nowadays? Shiliu tried it before, but his store's already closed down..."

Lu Boyuan interrupted him. "God Jian."

Jian Rong still wasn't used to other people calling him that, and it took him a few seconds to respond. "What?"

Lu Boyuan held back a smile. “If you truly can’t come up with any words of comfort, you don’t have to force yourself.”

Jian Rong fell silent as he turned his head back around and stopped speaking.

His WeChat was still chiming away. Lu Boyuan pulled out his phone and glanced at it before he clicked on the voice messages that XIU just sent—

“It’s over, bro, the hand doctor is here too, and they even arranged a full body examination for me.

“Earlier, there were a few doctors surrounding me with a huge group of interns following behind them. It made me think that I was about to have to enter the ICU.

“I feel like I won’t be able to make it to MSI. Whatever, let’s fight again in the next season.”

He didn’t mention the word ‘*retire*’ at all in his voice messages.

Lu Boyuan answered: *Don’t worry, you guys weren’t going to play in MSI anyway, recover well.*

“Have you ever thought about retiring before?” Jian Rong, who was quiet for some time, suddenly asked.

Lu Boyuan looked over, still holding his phone, and met Jian Rong’s eyes for several seconds.

Lu Boyuan said, “I haven’t.”

It seemed that the older generation of famous pro players were all like this. Retiring at the height of their careers was never an option they chose to consider.

When they first started playing competitively, the industry of esports was still a wasteland. A monthly income of 2,000 *yuan* for official pro players was already considered high, and many professional teams trained in internet cafes. There were even some teams who took public transport to the stadiums—in that era, finding any random part-time job was more worthwhile than being a pro esports player.

Those who were able to enter the industry and persevere in it relied completely on their passion and dreams.

Lu Boyuan had experienced days where he couldn't afford to smoke, being betrayed by teammates, and having to endure through many unavoidable nights filled with pain from his injuries. But he had never once thought about retiring before.

Before, it was because he felt like he still wanted to fight and could still outplay. But now, apart from all that, there was another additional reason.

Jian Rong rubbed his face and clicked his tongue very lightly.

Lu Boyuan: "What's the matter."

"The year you guys won Worlds, I sent my resume to Ding-*ge*. I passed, and he even sent me a text telling me to come in for tryouts." Jian Rong pressed his lips together. "If I had gone in back then…"

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. “We couldn’t have dated, you’d have been too young.”

“…”

Jian Rong gritted his teeth. “What I’m trying to say is… I could’ve been teammates with you for a few years longer.”

“So confident in yourself?” Lu Boyuan said, “There were a lot of people participating in tryouts at that time. Even if you had come, it’s not guaranteed that you could’ve become a starter.”

Right as Jian Rong’s swears were about to leave his mouth, his hair was ruffled several times.

“But fortune’s wheel is ever turning.” Lu Boyuan laughed. “Now it’s my turn to think about how I can play with you for a few more years.”

Jian Rong was slightly startled, and there was instantly a sting in his heart.

The evening wind blew comfortably against his face. Jian Rong stared silently out into the night for a long while before he said, “…I’ll work harder.”

“What?”

“I’ll work harder during practice, carry more games, and reduce the match durations as much as possible.”

If the match duration was cut down by one minute, that meant Lu Boyuan’s wrist could rest for one minute longer.

Its effectiveness was probably next to nothing, but besides that, Jian Rong couldn't think of any better methods for the time being.

The sound of Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian shouting came from inside the base. It seemed like one of the pro players had pulled off some flashy play.

Jian Rong didn't think that what he just said was arrogant at all. He straightened up and said, "Let's go in and watch the match."

As he turned around, Jian Rong suddenly recalled something, and he asked, frowning, "Where'd you get the cigarettes from?"

"Ding-*ge* left it on the dining table, I took it when I was passing by."

"…"

"It's fine, I only smoked one, he won't find out." Lu Boyuan collected his thoughts back from Jian Rong's earlier statement and said, "Before we go in, comfort me one more time."

Remembering Lu Boyuan's previous evaluation, Jian Rong narrowed his eyes and said stiffly, "Didn't you think that my comforting skills were terrible?"

"What you did when you first came out here wasn't too bad." With one hand stuffed in his pocket, Lu Boyuan leaned his head down towards Jian Rong.

…

In the second semifinals match, PUD beat KUG by a narrow margin of 3:2 and officially advanced to the spring season finals, becoming TTC's

opponent for the upcoming match.

However, due to the unexpected absence of PUD's starting jungler, everyone's attention was directed elsewhere after the match concluded.

After returning to the practice room post-match, Jian Rong browsed through the comments in the hot search topic "*XIU hand injury absent from semifinals*." They were all saying things that he didn't like to read—

「The end of legends... Road and XIU both are plagued by injuries, I feel like the LPL's native junglers are about to crumble down.」

「It's an unlucky year for the LPL, both of its great junglers fell. At least PUD had some foresight and signed a rookie jungler, TTC only has that little trash sub left... I heard that in private, Road completely suppresses substitutes, so no jungler with a bit of fame is willing to enter TTC. Now, it looks like all I can say is that he deserves it.」

Jian Rong slouched back in his chair, waiting to match into a game. When he saw that comment, he immediately clicked on it and swiftly responded—[I also heard that there's something wrong with your head. Now, it looks like all I can say is that you deserve it.]

「Insider info, my cousin is a staff for TTC, she said that Road is going to announce his retirement this month. TTC has already started preparing for his retirement!!! [sobbing]」

Jian Rong replied lazily—[Then your cousin is pretty incredible.]

Jian Rong queued into a game and set down his phone. Right as he was about to pick his champion, Ding-*ge* called him.

Probably because he had gotten into quite a bit of trouble by this point, Jian Rong faintly had a bad feeling about this. Before answering the phone, he first checked the Weibo page again—

[TTC · Soft replied to QiaoYao: Then your cousin is pretty incredible.]

Jian Rong: "…"

Fuck.

He had forwarded the merch advertisement post the day before yesterday and had forgotten to switch accounts.

In the short span of two minutes, countless comments emerged underneath his—

[Even after one spring season has passed, my dumbass son is still the first to be up in arms for Road.]

[*Wuwu*, dumbass darling stop sucking up, Road has already betrayed you, he has a partner now]

[So heart-wrenching.]

Jian Rong answered the call. "If I told you I didn't do it on purpose, would you believe me?"

Ding-*ge* was about to say '*like hell laozi would believe you*,' but then he lowered his head and looked at his phone again—

[TTC · Road replied to TTC · Soft: Done with practice? Let's voice call?]

WTF!

What? You also need to flirt underneath someone else's Weibo comment, is that so?!

Ding-*ge* was overwhelmed by fury, and he hung up the phone to lecture that damn jungler instead, who was at the hospital late at night removing his bandages and applying ointment but still didn't forget to play on his phone and reply to his boyfriend's comments.

—

The spring season finals were being held at Chongqing this year. The day before the match, TTC packed their suitcases and departed from Pudong Airport.

In order to avoid being mocked by Zhuang Yibai, on the way to the airport, Jian Rong kept thinking about how to check in once they got there so as to make it seem like this wasn't his first time flying in a plane.

However, he was clearly overthinking things. The manager took care of checking in for them, and all he had to do was hand over his ID.

As soon as they got on the plane, Xiao Bai looked back and said, "I heard that XIU won't be playing in the finals this time."

For the sake of catching their opponents off guard, many teams only handed in their starting rosters at the very last moment.

"I think so too." Yuan Qian murmured, "He was just lifted into the ambulance a few days ago. Under those circumstances, I bet that it'll take him at least ten days, if not half a month, to recover…"

Xiao Bai glanced at Lu Boyuan. "*Ge*, did XIU reveal anything to you?"

"Mn." Lu Boyuan said lazily, "He keeps giving me smoke bombs, saying that he'll play the first three games and the sub will play the last two."

Jian Rong scoffed and asked, "What did you say?"

"I asked him if he can get out of bed yet."

Even though it was a very heartless reply, a burst of laughter instantly floated out from business class.

Soon, the plane's cabin door was closed, and the gentle and pleasant boarding announcement was transmitted from the PA system. "Please take your seat and fasten your seat belt. Make sure your seat back and folding trays are in their full upright position…"

Jian Rong was distracted for one brief moment, and by then, the flight attendant in front of them had already finished demonstrating how to fasten their seat belts.

Jian Rong: "…"

He tugged out his seat belt from behind him and scrutinized it closely.

First, he attempted to pull open the metal piece. With a *thunk*, the seat belt clasp returned to its original shape.

Two seconds later, Jian Rong discovered the sunken section in the middle, and understanding dawned on him.

He was about to attempt to plug the other piece in when someone took away the seat belt from him.

Lu Boyuan leaned over and helped him fasten his seat belt. Then, he stuck his hand into the space between the seat belt and Jian Rong's stomach, checking its tightness.

"Is it tight."

Jian Rong shook his head. "...it isn't."

—that scene was reflected right into Xiao Bai's eyes, who was about to ask Jian Rong for his opinion on the beautiful flight attendants.

Xiao Bai remained frozen in his peeping posture and spaced out for a while. In his head, many minor details that he had ignored in the past suddenly all connected together.

A beat later, his eyes widened abruptly. He turned his head and forcefully knocked his shoulder against Pine's.

Pine opened his eyes impatiently. "What is it?"

Xiao Bai scooted towards him and acted like he had uncovered some huge secret. "P-baby... I feel like there's something weird going on with my *ge*

and Jian Rong!"

Pine looked at him. "What's weird?"

Xiao Bai lowered his voice. "My *ge* just helped fasten Jian Rong's seat belt for him."

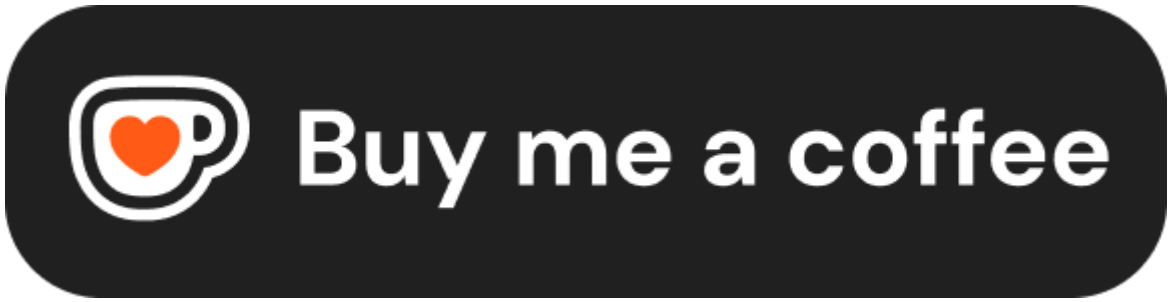
Pine reminded him calmly, "When you first rode a plane as a country bumpkin, I also helped fasten your seat belt for you."

"...that's not it. I thought about it carefully, and I think that a lot of their behavior has been really strange lately—for example, Jian Rong obviously spent the night in my *ge*'s room, but he wouldn't admit it. When he heard other people say that my *ge* has a partner, he also reacted very strongly, and my *ge* even gave Jian Rong his own coffee to drink. And lastly... the way my *ge* fastened Jian Rong's seat belt was completely different from the way we did it!"

Just as Pine was going to tell him to shut up, Xiao Bai suddenly reached out and placed his hand against Pine's lower abdomen, separated by his shirt—

"Just like this! They did this too!" Xiao Bai whispered eagerly, "Did you do this back then? You didn't, right? Normally people wouldn't act like this, right??"

Pine: "..."



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ICDI Chapter 109: Pre-game trash talk.

Thank you to Somebody for the generous Ko-fi!

Before coming to Chongqing, Xiao Bai listed all of its delicious food that he knew of 8,888 times in their team voice chat during their practice matches.

After arriving at Chongqing, Ding-*ge* herded them into the team's prearranged bus like he was herding a flock of ducks and dragged everyone to Haidilao[1].

Their staff had come with them to Chongqing this time as well. Adding in the assistant manager, assistant coach, and personal assistants, they just happened to have enough people to fill up a private room.

"No… it's one thing to eat at Haidilao." Yuan Qian stared at the pot in front of them with no appetite. "But this? Clear broth and mushroom soup?"

The one area that TTC's five members shared the most similarities in was food. They were all spice lovers, and every time they ordered takeout, the entire table was covered with bright red, making it look especially festive.

Without batting an eye, Ding-*ge* started ordering for them. "The day before last year's semifinals, you guys ate mala bullfrog, and one hour prior to the match, Kan was still crying about how his stomach hurt. Have you not learned your lesson yet?"

Yuan Qian propped his chin up on his hand. "BS, he was nervous back then because he was about to matchfix, how could his stomach not hurt?"

Upon hearing that, the originally listless group of people couldn't help but burst out in self-derisive laughter, which was also peppered with quite a few "*damns*" and "*what the hells*."

Time was the best medicine. No matter how unacceptable, uncomfortable, or disgusting it was back then, now that it was in the past, it had merely become another joke.

Jian Rong didn't laugh. He wasn't there before, so he had no way of lamenting and then chuckling about it with the people who had actually experienced it. It was also fortunate that he wasn't there, or else by this point, he would've already been eternally banned from competing for beating up Kan.

Lu Boyuan was the same. Though XIU was the one with the injury, he didn't want his opponents to have an easy time either. The moment XIU got off the plane, he had started mentally harassing Lu Boyuan, texting things like "*old pal, it's been a long time since I've seen you play Ezreal jungle, really miss it*" and "*I feel like your team's mid laner is super good at Talon, is he considering it for the finals*." After checking his unread messages, Lu Boyuan directly slapped a do not disturb onto him.

They had been practicing a lot lately, so Jian Rong hadn't gotten enough sleep the night before. He took a two hour nap on the plane, but that just made him feel even more sleepy now.

His eyelids drooped drowsily. After he gave a yawn, he finally couldn't stand it any longer and looked at the person next to him. "If you have something to say, then freaking say it."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Jian Rong had realized it a long time ago: starting from the instant he had woken up on the plane, Zhuang Yibai's gaze had remained fixed on him.

Xiao Bai wanted to ask, but he also didn't dare to. As a result, he put on a show of picking up the strainer spoon and fishing around the hot pot with it. "It's nothing, I was just gonna ask if you wanted to eat… mushrooms?"

Jian Rong was full of grumpiness from waking up, and he didn't feel like bothering with him.

The meal that night went by fairly smoothly. Ding-*ge* looked at his dispirited players and was filled with satisfaction.

The evening before the finals, other teams' players got so nervous that their bathroom trip frequency directly doubled, and they would also either have insomnia or dream a lot. The next day on camera, they would become a row of haggard faces.

But that didn't happen with TTC. They had ample competition experience, so their mentalities were all top-tier among the pro players.

As for their newest member…

Ding-*ge* glanced over, just in time to see Jian Rong tug sneakily on Lu Boyuan's shirt. Then, Jian Rong picked up the hot pepper seasoning that he had hidden next to a certain corner of his chair and covertly passed it to Lu Boyuan under the table.

Ding-*ge*: "…"

Forget the spring season finals.

Even if the World Championship finals were to commence tomorrow, their newest member probably wouldn't raise a single eyebrow.

However, this peaceful perfection didn't last for very long.

As a healthy little fatty who couldn't eat a lot and got full easily, Xiao Bai ended up chewing on a toothpick as usual, waiting for the others to finish, while he browsed through his phone to pass the time.

He rubbed his little belly and went to check if any pro players were streaming. Right as he casually opened a certain streaming platform, he saw an advertisement banner hanging bright and obvious at the top of the app —

[A warm welcome to the LCK's strongest battleship, HT, for joining Momo Live! All HT members will officially begin streaming tonight at eight!]

"*Shit*" flashed across Xiao Bai's mind. When he clicked on the banner, he was immediately sent into the stream for HT's ADC, Rish—

As luck would have it, Rish was currently broadcasting Jian Rong's Cassiopeia 1v5 highlight clip from the semifinals.

Because he hadn't found a stream that he wanted to watch, Xiao Bai didn't have time to put in earphones before a burst of Korean spilled out from his phone. Just by the tone of voice alone, it sounded mocking enough.

Rish: “&#%¥…Soft…%.”

Not many people present could understand Korean, but everyone still looked over at Xiao Bai.

Lu Boyuan’s eyes darkened, and he put down his chopsticks before he picked up a towelette and wiped his hands.

“Whose stream are you watching? How come I heard Jian Rong’s ID…” Yuan Qian peered over. After he saw who was in the video at the bottom left corner of the screen, he blurted out, “What the hell, how come HT came over to our side to stream?”

Ding-*ge* took a sip of the soup. “Momo Live, right? I’ve heard about it, apparently HT was the one who reached out to them too. At first, they contacted StarTV, but StarTV’s boss knew about their dark history, so he rejected them without even considering it. After that, they sought out Momo.”

“What’s Momo’s boss thinking?” Yuan Qian was astonished. “Everyone knows that HT internally discriminates against the LPL, which is why they’ve never really had any domestic fans here…”

“They don’t need fans.” Lu Boyuan said indifferently, “There’s more than enough people who admire the strong or are simply curious. Also, even if people go to curse them out, they’re still an audience—all Momo needs is traffic, streaming platforms don’t make money off of gifts.”

Ding-*ge* nodded. “And to tell the truth, Master has a lot of fans in China. In the first place, most of those people already dislike the LPL.”

Jian Rong swallowed the tripe that Lu Boyuan had just finished cooking for him before he turned his head and asked, "What did that dumbass say about me?"

Jian Rong didn't have a glass heart, so Lu Boyuan had no intentions of hiding it from him.

"'Even a Cassiopeia like Soft's can get a penta kill, it looks like the LPL has become even more disappointing and terrible this year. It seems that no matter how many Korean import players we send over here, there's no helping it. In the future, everyone should just support our HT. Esports doesn't distinguish between borders, if our pro players can compete over on your side, then you all can also like our country's esports teams'..." Lu Boyuan's voice was measured as he translated without missing a single word. "That's more or less what he said."

Ding-*ge*: "..."

A professional translator wouldn't even have translated that as naturally as you did.

If you wanna fucking see our mid laner go into Rish's stream and go crazy while flaming and laning against him, then just say it. There's no need for you to torture me painfully like this.

Ding-*ge* set down his chopsticks, already prepared to stop Jian Rong.

Unexpectedly, after Jian Rong finished listening to Lu Boyuan, he merely tossed down an unconcerned "*dumbass*" before he picked up some tripe with the serving chopsticks and continued putting it into the hot pot.

It ended up being Xiao Bai whose eyes widened. “Wow, what kind of moron is Rish? Who does he think he is, hah? Every time we lane, I pummel him into shit and he still has the nerve to tell LPL fans to be his fan? That stinky dog who’s always being carried, how shameless is he?!”

“Exactly, if it weren’t for Kan last year… who knows who would’ve won.” Yuan Qian frowned and clicked his tongue. “Bad luck.”

“Didn’t Jian Rong also slaughter him ruthlessly last time in ranked…” Halfway through his sentence, Xiao Bai nudged the person sitting next to him with his elbow, a puzzled expression on his face. “Did you hear my *ge*’s translation?”

Jian Rong said, “I heard it.”

“Then how come you didn’t respond?”

“I’ve been penalized too many times in the past few months. The most recent one isn’t removed until next week.” Jian Rong said rationally, “If I’m fined one more time, I’ll be hit with a competition ban.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

Rish’s trick was indeed effective. Because of his nasty mouth, he never had many fans in China, but by ridiculing the LPL’s pro players, his stream popularity skyrocketed. Most of the people were there to insult him, and the room mods internally cursed Rish out while helping him block people at the same time, making them feel extremely stifled. Of course, there were also some antis without a bottom line who were in the stream worshipping his smelly feet as they followed his example and flamed LPL players.

In short, it was chaos and an eyesore.

For the sake of not affecting the members' moods, Ding-*ge* told Xiao Bai to turn off the stream. Then, he brought everyone to the hotel.

Originally, the competition side was supposed to take care of the hotel arrangements, but Fu-*ge* wanted everyone to live a bit more comfortably. With a wave of his hand, he upgraded everyone's rooms to suites, with two bedrooms per suite.

After promising Ding-*ge* that he wouldn't cause any trouble, Lu Boyuan took the room card and led Jian Rong, who was pushing his luggage along for him, into their room.

It was only when the door closed behind them that Jian Rong realized in hindsight—did this count as them getting a room?

With one hand kneading the handle of a suitcase, he stood in the entryway foolishly for a few seconds.

Lu Boyuan looked back at him. "What's the matter?"

Jian Rong shook his head. "…nothing."

He pushed Lu Boyuan's suitcase into one of the rooms. He was about to head to the other room when Lu Boyuan grabbed onto his wrist.

"Where are you going?"

Jian Rong said, "…to my room."

Though he said that, he slowly pulled back the foot that had already taken one step out.

Lu Boyuan nodded. “Wanna sleep separately?”

Jian Rong hesitated briefly before he turned around and walked back into the first room. With a wooden expression, he said, “No.”

There was a spacious double bed in each room, and it looked as if it could even fit three people.

Jian Rong sat on the ground and opened his own suitcase. Instantly, he was greeted with a few pairs of underwear—he had stuffed them in hastily in the morning. Compared to Lu Boyuan’s luggage, Jian Rong’s suitcase looked like it had been searched through by a thief.

Lu Boyuan suddenly thought of something, and he asked, “How come you don’t wear the pair with Action Mask on the back anymore?”

“…” Jian Rong froze while he was sorting through his suitcase. He replied vaguely, “It shrank.”

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. “Did it?”

Jian Rong clenched his teeth. “It did.”

Lu Boyuan laughed and stopped teasing him. He ruffled Jian Rong’s hair before he got up and went to shower.

After they had both washed up, Jian Rong was so sleepy that he dove right under the covers. Even when his phone sounded consecutively a few times,

he was too lazy to look at it.

Lu Boyuan was sitting at the head of the bed, and he exited a match recording to check the notifications.

Jian Rong's eyes remained closed as he asked languidly, "Who?"

"Xiao Bai." Lu Boyuan said, "He said he wants to see the hotel room layout and asked if we could video call."

Jian Rong went silent for two seconds. "…he's crazy."

Lu Boyuan gave a huff of laughter before he put his phone on do not disturb.

Right as he switched back to the game recording, Jian Rong suddenly lifted his head from the pillow. "Are you not going to sleep?"

"I'm not tired yet. I'm not familiar with their jungler, so I wanted to watch him play Lillia." Lu Boyuan asked softly, "Did I disturb you?"

"No, you have earphones in, how could you disturb me."

That being said, Jian Rong continued to keep his head raised. His eyes were half-narrowed from exhaustion, and he was so sleepy that the rims of his eyes were red.

Lu Boyuan met Jian Rong's gaze for a few seconds before he suddenly understood.

Their match was tomorrow, so even though they were sharing a room together, they couldn't possibly do much.

However, a goodnight kiss seemed to be within the bounds of possibility.

Although Jian Rong was tired, when Lu Boyuan's lips pressed against his, he still ended up subconsciously opening his mouth—then, Lu Boyuan pinched his cheek very gently.

"Let's leave the rest for after the finals." Lu Boyuan wiped Jian Rong's lips with the back of his hand. "Go to sleep."

Jian Rong automatically linked "*the rest*" to the things they had done previously before this.

With reddened ears, he replied with an ambiguous "*en*." Hardly a moment later, he pressed his head against Lu Boyuan's leg and fell asleep.

—

The next day, the spring season finals officially kicked off.

Many spectators were still trapped in Rish's dumbass opinions from last night and couldn't free themselves. As soon as the match broadcast started, a huge chunk of comments floated densely and unceasingly across the barrage—

[When will HT die?]

[Momo Live is dumb as hell, giving money to HT for the sake of site traffic. Momo Live will go bankrupt tomorrow!]

[I was always a Soft anti before this, but after I saw Rish's stream yesterday night, I suddenly feel like Soft is actually quite pleasing to the eye.]

[Praying that TTC wins the match today, I hope that Soft can go to Korea and beat Rish into a pulp.]

[Give me a break, Soft became a coward after joining the LPL. Look at how much Rish mocked him yesterday. There's no way Soft doesn't know, but he still didn't speak up and flame him back.]

[PUD must win T-T, Savior darling, carry XIU-*ge*'s hopes with you and do your best!!]

[Who knows who'll be representing the LPL in MSI this time. If they lose to HT, that's the same as waiting to be cursed to death…]

In the midst of their discussion, the broadcast suddenly switched screens, and a prerecorded video was inserted—PUD's top laner, 98k, appeared on the screen. He sat on the stage wearing PUD's team uniform, with the empty stadium behind him.

The pre-game trash talk segment began.

Pre-game trash talking was a special segment that occurred before major LPL competitions. In this segment, you could exchange flames and taunts with the opponent that you were about to play against. As long as no profanity or personal attacks were involved, everything else was fair game; the purpose of the segment was to add some flavor to the competition.

Of course, the two players weren't supposed to argue face to face. Instead, they would exchange jibes back and forth through different cameras, which was then displayed to the audience via switching camera angles.

There had been many cases where pro players went too far with their taunting during the trash talk segment and had consequently been mocked for it till retirement upon losing the match...

The videos were recorded the day of the finals, so they were hot and fresh. The first ones to appear were both teams' top laners—

98k looked relaxed. "There's nothing really to say... is Qian still practicing my Volibear?"

The camera switched angles.

Yuan Qian maintained his smile. "The meta's changed, Volibear's useless now. 98k is about to fizzle out today too."

Right after them, the ADCs went—

PUD's ADC, KK: "I hope he won't be the first one to die all the time when he's team fighting, it's really quite boring this way."

The camera switched angles.

Pine: "You can criticize me once you have the guts to lane against me."

The support duo—

PUD's support, Dundun: "Has Bye made it to Challenger yet? He has? Whose thigh did he hug… I'm not trying to look down on him, but when he used to queue alone, I think the highest tier he ever made it to was only Diamond 1. To tell the truth, I feel quite sorry for him."

The camera switched angles. Xiao Bai was instantly stabbed where it hurt. "That's because I didn't want to climb! Also, what part of Challenger is more fun than Diamond?! And can you guys not call Savior over this match? If he's so strong then let him lane against our mid laner at mid!"

Dundun turned a blind eye to Xiao Bai's rage. "What's more, Pine's focused and oneshotted at the very beginning of every team fight. This actually has a lot to do with how capable the support is, doesn't it—"

Xiao Bai extended his hands and made a '*time-out*' gesture. "Stop, may I please ask the AFK-under-the-tower duo not to casually stir up anything between my P-baby and me, we love each other a lot."

The jungler team—

Road sat in a careless manner, and he didn't seem the slightest bit interested in this segment. "What's the name of the jungler playing today?"

"…has it started recording?" The substitute jungler that was temporarily replacing XIU said nervously, "Hello God Lu… I'm called Tuotuo, I hope that God Lu will remember it. After all, we'll be seeing each other often during competitions in the future."

The camera switched.

Road gave a leisurely laugh. “Let’s see each other in your jungle instead.”

Finally, the two young and inexperienced mid laners appeared on the video —

Savior licked his lips anxiously. “Hang on, let meh think of something to say… ah? It’s started? Then… Aye will do my best to make Soft disappear with our snowball strategy tonight.”

In the next shot, the bluenette lifted an eyebrow disdainfully. “You want me to trash talk Savior? If he cries, who’s to blame?”

Savior: “…”

Jian Rong leaned back in his chair and said, “However, I actually do have something to say to him—teach me a few sentences in Korean, I need them for when I go to Korea in two weeks.”

After he said that, the audience watched as he pulled out his phone and read off his notes:

“Useless ADC, stand up and bark like a dog.

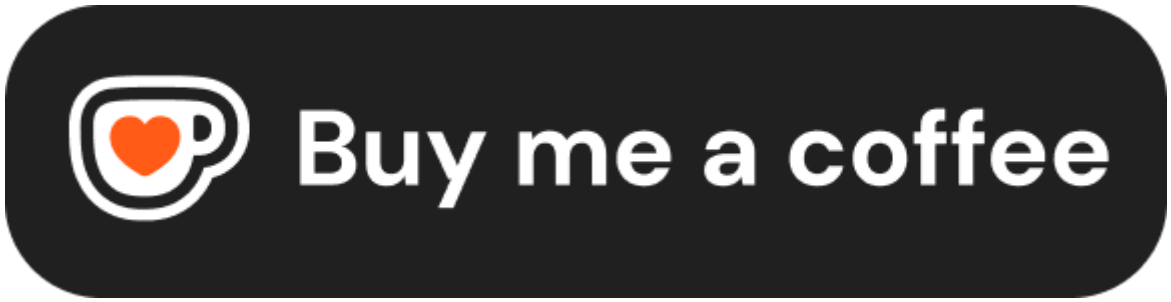
“Every other team in the LCK has to take responsibility for the fact that a garbage team like HT can represent and play on behalf of the LCK.

“I respect every Korean import player who complied with the rules when joining the LPL and remains serious and dedicated to their career. I also despise every piece of trash who discriminates against the LPL but still insists on bootlicking and streaming in China to earn money.”

Translation Notes

1. *Famous hot pot chain in China* ^

Yan: Who caught that PUBG reference? Hahaha missing Yanyan and Boss 1~



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ICDI Chapter 110: Online dating combo meal.

Thanks to Somebody for the Ko-fi!

Though the broadcast had started, the match coverage hadn't officially begun yet. The videos played in the beginning were meant to heat up the audience and test the stream.

As a result, a situation would frequently occur where several videos were repeated over and over.

[Stop playing ads, replay the trash talk video, Dad wants to hear it again.]

[My girlfriend sent me a text saying her parents aren't home tonight. I told her to either sleep early or find some other crap to do, don't bother me while I'm looping the trash talk segment. Bros~ am I doing it right?]

[The viewer count for the commercial segment is way higher than it's been in the past… I suggest that today's advertisers all pay Soft.]

[It's here it's here! The fourth replay is here, bros~!]

"They're still replaying it!" In the break room, the assistant coach was deeply concerned. "This director must be a PUD fan, right? They want to replay it more times so they can add fuel to the fire over at the LPL? What if in a bit the competition ban notice comes in while the team is competing…"

The pro players recorded this segment alone. At the time, everyone was busy backstage doing the players' makeup or preparing for the match. On

top of that, time was tight, so the footage was taken away to be edited as soon as they were done recording it. Apart from the staff members in charge of filming and the respective lane opponent, nobody knew what was said in the trash talk segment.

Just like the water friends spamming question marks in the barrage, this was also their first time hearing Jian Rong say all that.

Ding-*ge* sat on the sofa, as steady as a mountain.

He had weathered through too many storms. Something like "*team member flaming someone*" was already ranked at the very bottom of his worries in his mind.

"It's fine." Ding-*ge* stuffed a chunk of watermelon into his mouth. "This has all been inspected beforehand. If he really couldn't say it, the person in charge wouldn't have dared to release this clip."

Rish's comments from last night had been cursed to the point that it got on the hot search. Anyone who even slightly followed the esports circle would've seen it.

Naturally, the LPL's management had also seen it.

Previously, HT's ridicule towards the LPL had always occurred outside of the domestic web, so they had no way of controlling it. But now that group of dumbasses had already started bullying them right in their own territory; as if the LPL's management could endure it?

Did HT really think the LPL didn't have a temper?

If this had taken place a few years ago, pro players from both leagues would've most likely passionately laned against each other 800 times by now.

However, things were different now. The LPL had already become commercialized, and nobody wanted to destroy their own reputation or damage their team's market value. They especially didn't want to be penalized because of something like this.

Ding-*ge* sighed and thought, *The last part of that trash talk segment was worded so well. If only this brave soul wasn't our mid laner, that would've been even better.*

"You're allowed to say that in the trash talk segment?" Xiao Bai was stunned. "I've learned something new…"

Before he could finish his sentence, Ding-*ge* flicked him on the forehead. "A person in his twenties is still in his rebellious phase? You just like learning from bad students?"

The "bad student" didn't even bother looking up when he heard Ding-*ge*'s criticism of him. He kept his mouth closed as he chewed on the piece of gum that Lu Boyuan had just handed him.

Upon hearing that trash talk segment, Lu Boyuan wasn't actually particularly surprised either.

Once the trash talk finished replaying for the fourth time, the broadcast finally switched over to the commentators.

Lu Boyuan turned his head and asked, “Didn’t you manage to restrain yourself last night?”

Jian Rong blew a bubble before he punctured it with his teeth and sucked it back into his mouth. He said somewhat tonelessly, “After I slept on it, I got angrier the more that I thought about it.”

At that moment, in other people’s eyes, Jian Rong was precisely just a belligerent teenager who had an irritable temper and shouldn’t be messed with.

Lu Boyuan resisted the urge to furiously ruffle his hair and slipped his hands into his pockets.

A staff member dropped by and notified them that they were going on stage in ten minutes.

As usual, Lu Boyuan took out his phone. He was about to turn it off when a call suddenly came in.

He glanced at the caller ID and hesitated briefly before he still ended up answering it. “Mom.”

Jian Rong jolted and couldn’t help but look at him.

Mama Lu said gently, “Boyuan, did you eat dinner yet?”

Papa Lu’s voice sounded in the background—“He’s just dating, that’s all, what’s the fuss about? Why do we have to worry about something that’s

barely even begun to take shape yet? If he can bring his partner home, let's talk about it then!"

Mama Lu looked back and asked, "Can you quietly go and play your chess?"

Lu Boyuan understood what was going on now, and he lowered his gaze slightly to meet Jian Rong's as a hint of a smile appeared on his lips. "Mom, I'm about to compete. We can talk about this later."

"I know. I just opened the match broadcast website, but I thought you were free since you weren't on stage yet." Mama Lu responded, "Go ahead then. Actually, it isn't really too urgent, it's just your Auntie Gu's daughter said that there were rumors all over the internet about how you have a partner now…"

Lu Boyuan said, "I do have one."

After hanging up, Lu Boyuan asked, amused, "Eavesdropping?"

Jian Rong was currently glaring at Xiao Bai, who was squawking and shouting nearby, creating unnecessary noise. Upon hearing that, he turned his head back around and said unhappily, "It's too loud, I didn't hear anything."

Ding-*ge* confirmed that everyone was in good physical condition before he beckoned to them, indicating for them to go on stage.

The stadium for the finals was bigger than all the previous stadiums. When Jian Rong walked on stage, he was nearly blinded by the lights.

In this kind of situation, apart from his teammates' backs and the equipment on the stage, he couldn't see anything else.

But the audience's cheers were very distinct. Both teams' fans were extremely harmonious tonight, and they had arranged it so that they each took turns shouting.

Amidst the uniform and organized exchange of "*good luck PUD*" and "*TTC must win*," a piercing female voice rose above the others from the front row —

"Dumbass good luck! Go to Korea and bury Rish!!!"

Right as the entire stadium was roaring with laughter, an astonishing scene occurred.

On the stadium's big screen TV and the broadcast, the little bluenette had just sat down with his water bottle and was in the middle of adjusting his peripherals as usual. He hadn't put on his headphones yet, and he suddenly lifted his hand before he did a thumbs-up towards the camera directed at him.

Although he didn't say a single word, nor did he even glance at the camera, everyone seemed to hear his reply based off of this gesture alone.

—[I will.]

His teammates next to him also witnessed this move.

Upon hearing the wave-like screams, Ding-*ge* couldn't help but sigh—some people were simply born to play competitively, in terms of both skill and personality.

By putting someone like Jian Rong on stage, the viewing pleasure of the match was already infinitely higher before anything else even began.

Xiao Bai was extremely envious, and he asked in their team voice chat, "Can you take back the gesture that you just did? Let me stir things up this time."

"I suddenly remembered something." Yuan Qian sucked in a breath through his teeth. "Jian Rong, did Savior really teach you how to say the things you said in the trash talk segment?"

Jian Rong: "No."

Pine said, "Savior probably didn't understand most of it."

Xiao Bai: "Hahahaha I think so too, then once he left and asked a teammate to translate for him, he must've been scared to death—"

Yuan Qian also laughed. "But if you wanna learn Korean, why don't you ask Captain?"

Right as Jian Rong was about to say that he was only intending to flame people and didn't genuinely want to learn it, he heard Lu Boyuan say mildly, "He probably thinks that I'm not good at teaching."

Yuan Qian asked, "How does he know you're not good at it when you've never even taught him before? Jian Rong, pick up a few phrases from him

these next few days, it'll come in handy once we go to Korea."

Lu Boyuan said, "I've taught him other things."

Startled, Jian Rong asked subconsciously, "When did you teach me…"

The corners of Lu Boyuan's mouth lifted ever so slightly. "The night of the semifinals."

Those five words nailed Jian Rong directly to his chair.

"So hardworking? You still have the energy to learn that kind of thing after a match?" Yuan Qian didn't understand what Lu Boyuan really meant, and he said, amazed, "What'd he teach you? Actually, I know a few phrases in Korean too, things like *ssibal, pabo*[1]…"

"He taught me…" Jian Rong was lacking in confidence, and he said vaguely, "Just those two phrases."

Lu Boyuan chuckled before he indicated that he was ready to the referee who came up to check their equipment.

After that surge of enthusiasm passed, Xiao Bai abruptly thought of something. "Wait a minute, then what happens if we lose to HT at MSI? Should we tell Fu-*ge* to create an underground base and we'll live in a fissure?"

You only realized that now?

Ding-*ge* rolled his eyes so hard they almost flew out of the arena. "Can you guys wake up a little? You're competing in the spring season finals right

now, it's not even guaranteed that you all are going to Korea yet!"

"Damn." Yuan Qian straightened up and rotated his wrists to relax them. "We have to win today, or else I won't have the guts to stream again for the rest of my life—"

Xiao Bai: "You're still gonna stream? You might as well stream your retirement."

Pine analyzed calmly, "We have all our starters this time, but they're missing their starting jungler. If we still lose, we should just retire and go farm instead."

Jian Rong said, "Don't worry. I'm the one who said it, so I'll take responsibility if we lose."

Ding-*ge* asked curiously, "How will you take responsibility?"

"I'll post a long Weibo flaming them." Jian Rong said, unconcerned, "That way, they'll all come to insult me."

Ding-*ge*: "……"

Laning genius.

Yuan Qian laughed first before he said, "Enough with that '*I'll take responsibility*' nonsense… we're all one team, so if anything happens, we'll definitely share the burden."

"That's right! If there are hardships, we'll suffer together, but if there are blessings, I'll enjoy it alone." Xiao Bai muttered, "Also, I've disliked Rish for

a long time now. After this match, I'm gonna steal one of Doufu's team uniforms, and then when I get to Korea, I'm gonna cover Rish's face with it and trap him in the bathroom to beat him up!"

Pine said coldly, "The voice chat recording has already started."

Xiao Bai: "I'm sorry monitoring *gege*, if you put this part on the Mic Check, I'm done for. Out of the kindness of your heart, do a good deed and help your little brother out here—"

With a *thunk*, they entered the pick/ban phase, and the first game of the spring season finals officially began.

Lu Boyuan withdrew his smile and said, "Get ready. Let's play well today and win as we please."

After a season of competing, both teams were very familiar with each other's commonly used strategies. They didn't waste any time on the banning phase.

PUD's first three ban spots were given straight to LeBlanc, Aphelios, and Lee Sin. Ding-*ge* also immediately blocked the champions PUD excelled at: Orianna, Volibear, and Renekton.

PUD chose the blue side this game, so they had first pick.

Right off the bat, PUD went for a jungle champion, Graves.

"I knew it." Ding-*ge* narrowed his eyes. Standing next to Lu Boyuan, he said, "Tuotuo's champion pool is more or less the same as yours, and he also

really likes playing carry junglers."

"He's probably another little fan of my *ge*." Xiao Bai laughed. "After all, the second Road."

Jian Rong said frostily, "There is no second version of him."

Ding-*ge* solicited Lu Boyuan's opinion. "What do you want to play?"

Lu Boyuan said, "XIU sent me a text before the match."

Jian Rong furrowed his brows, displeased. "He's still harassing you? What did he say."

Lu Boyuan chuckled. "He said… either I should lose, or I should help him show this jungler, who's been wanting to replace him as a starter this entire time, just how cruel the LPL is."

Commentator A: "Okay, the support ratings for both of our teams have already come out! TTC's support rating is… 82%?!"

Usually when two strong teams from the same pro league clashed, the team with the higher support rating would have a rating between 60-70%.

Commentator B: "That's normal, considering Soft's fierce plays during the trash talk segment. Next up, let's see what role TTC will use their second pick for—Nidalee! Jungler! TTC actually pulled out a carry jungler as well??"

"Is that so surprising? Wasn't Road born from playing burst junglers? As far as I can remember, nobody's dared to hedge their carry jungler against

Road yet this season." Commentator C laughed. "What Road means here is—let me teach this LPL newcomer how to play a carry jungler."

Following that, TTC locked in Thresh support and Kog'Maw ADC in quick succession.

Commentator A was puzzled. "I'm a little confused by TTC's team comp? Are they going for 3C? Then wouldn't Qian-*ge* have a bit too much pressure on him?"

The 3C team composition was also known as the three carry team comp. Its unique characteristic was that it dealt an extremely impressive amount of damage during team fights; a single fully developed lane could deal enough DPS all on its own.

However, the disadvantage was also very obvious—it lacked tanks and CC, and having too many glass cannons made it easy to potentially feed.

After Yuan Qian selected Sion, the commentators were nearly certain that TTC was going for a 3C team composition. As a result, they started analyzing the situation—

"Actually, I feel like it isn't a great idea to use a three carry team comp against PUD. After all, PUD in itself already has solid macro. Although XIU isn't here, 98k's support top laner is still extremely effective in team fights."

"That's right. What's more, 98k picked Ornn this round. If he farms well, he'll be at the front the entire time in late game, which will make TTC very uncomfortable."

“Savior’s Syndra also has more than enough CC, so it all boils down to what champion Soft will pick. To tell the truth, I’m really afraid that he’ll pull out a Yasuo…”

The commentators’ voices abruptly cut off.

They watched as a little smiling witch’s face appeared in TTC’s fifth slot.

TTC’s mid lane champion finally appeared—Lulu, the Fae Sorceress.

Lulu was a support champion. Three out of her four abilities healed, shielded, or sped up her teammates, and she was full of healer attributes. Her character design was short, small, and cute; Lulu frequently occupied one of the top three spots in female players’ hearts.

Of course, her shield skill dealt damage to an enemy, her movement boost skill silenced enemies, and the magic bolts fired during her Q were also quite damaging—this allowed her to simultaneously be a protective-style mid laner, which occasionally surfaced in competitive play. Typically, such a Lulu was used to protect the ADC, top laner, or jungler.

The sole objective of this champion in the mid lane was to muddle along timidly and wait for the late game.

With the shield, movement boost, and ult, as long as you were careful enough, enemies wouldn’t be able to gank or solo kill you.

But at the same time, it was very difficult for you to be more than the tiniest sliver of a threat to your lane opponent…

Logically speaking, it wasn't strange for a support mid laner like her to appear in competitive play. For example, Fighting Tiger's Da Niu often took her out for a stroll, but—

Commentator A: "Soft picked support Lulu???!"

Commentator B: "Wait a second, I'm quite curious—does he know that this champion can shield?"

"I feel like he doesn't." Commentator C pushed up his glasses and analyzed calmly, "He played Lulu once when he was duo queuing with Pine. In forty-seven minutes, he only gave Pine three shields… but it's fine. I trust that tonight, burst damage Lulu is about to appear in front of everyone's eyes. May all the female players sit tight and get ready to welcome an all new powerful playstyle for your daughter Lulu—"

Naturally, burst damage Lulu didn't exist.

The game began. In the first five minutes, Soft's Lulu single-mindedly cleared minions and carefully positioned herself to avoid Syndra's skills. The mid lane was peaceful and undisturbed, and nothing happened.

Commentator A: "Ah, I'm not used to this at all."

Commentator B: "I think the director isn't used to it either. They keep cutting the camera back to show us the two of them clearing minions."

Commentator C didn't waver. "No, it's definitely not this simple. I'm sure that Soft's internal capability for violence is about to erupt…"

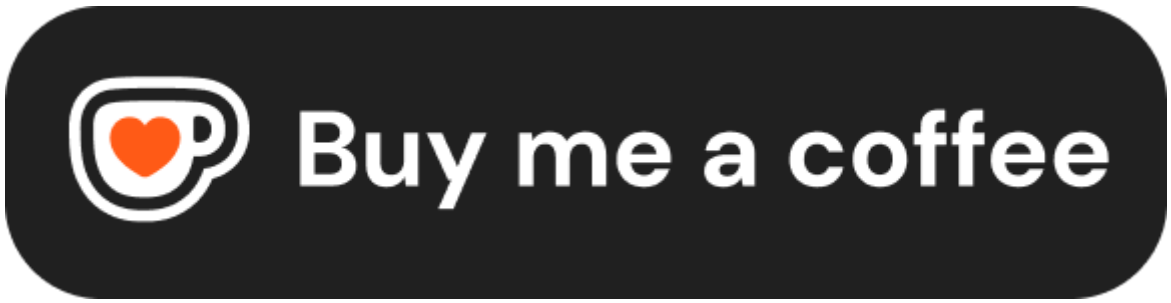
He didn’t finish his sentence.

Because as Soft was getting ready to recall to base after clearing his minions, he let the animation progress for two seconds before he canceled it himself. Immediately after, the adorable Lulu lightly lifted up her magic staff—

And gave Road, who was passing by at full health, a “brimming with love” movement boost + shield online dating combo meal.

Translation Notes

1. *Ssibal = fuck, pabo = idiot* ^



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ICDI Chapter 111: To help boost your energy.

After giving out those two skills, Lulu continued recalling to base. Nidalee paused for a second as she was passing by before she raised her hand and gave Lulu, who was in the middle of channeling, an unnecessary heal. Then she vanished back into their team's jungle.

Question marks first filled the entire broadcast barrage, followed by—

[It's reciprocal (confident).]

[The director is quite the expert. Look at how the four people in the bot lane are already fighting to the point that their icons are overlapping in the minimap, yet the director can still switch over to the mid lane to show us this.]

[And they're both using the Snowdown Showdown skins…]

[If you cover their IDs, I feel like I'm watching those big esports accounts submit article drafts. The content of the draft is: "Why date in the Rift, are these two poor fools too broke to go to the movies?"]

[Soft has someone he likes already, and Road also has a partner. Respect the pro players a little, can you all stop shipping them??]

[Nobody said that the person Soft likes isn't Road, and nobody said that Road's partner isn't Soft.]

[Holy shit???? The sister above, wait a second??? How come I'm getting this feeling that I've been utterly and supremely enlightened?!!!]

[In the pre-game trash talk, he made it sound like he was going to set off for Korea tonight to pummel HT, but after he got on stage, he's out there on a healer Lulu tenderly lingering with Road.]

The three commentators were also rather stupefied.

Commentator A: "Ah this. This… this is probably because Soft sensed what we were talking about and wanted to tell us with his actions—he does know how to shield his teammates!"

Commentator B nodded repeatedly. "Correct. And also, what's wrong with playing Lulu? She has a long range and strong skills, so it's quite interesting to lane with her. Look how happy Soft is playing her—"

Right as Commentator B said that, the little bluenette in the bottom right corner of the screen switched his camera focus out of sheer boredom as he made his way back to his mid lane. He checked in on the four bot laners, who were engrossed in an intense, all out battle, and his eyes revealed a rare trace of envy.

In the end, after he switched back to his own perspective, he still couldn't stop himself. In front of more than 100 million people watching the broadcast nationwide, he opened his mouth wide, and without making any attempt to hide it—he gave an enormous yawn.

At that moment, half of the spectators felt like they were watching themselves sit impatiently through class in high school.

The other half was infected by him and couldn't help but also freaking yawn.

There were fun aspects of playing a healer, and it was suited for those altruistic, motherly players who wanted to save the common people and cherished the world—except Jian Rong wasn't one of them.

The reason he picked Lulu was because Xiao Bai's signature champion, Thresh, had been freed. Xiao Bai had expressed his 200% desire to play Thresh in the team voice chat, but Ding-*ge* had used the "*not good at protecting the ADC*" rationale to refuse.

Pine's Kog'Maw was a champion that didn't have any blink skills and was in dire need of his teammates' protection.

As a result, Xiao Bai had rambled on and brazenly stated that as long as Jian Rong chose a utility champion like Lulu or Karma, then this game was absolutely set.

Jian Rong had politely inquired as to whether Xiao Bai had gotten tired of living and wanted to go up to the heavens to be side by side with Rish.

After careful consideration, Ding-*ge* had unexpectedly come to the conclusion that Xiao Bai's argument was somewhat reasonable. Then he had skillfully asked what Lu Boyuan thought about Lulu mid.

Lu Boyuan's voice had been calm. "Anything's fine, 3C or utility both work, he can play whatever he likes… don't Lulu and Nidalee have skins from the same set?"

…in short, Jian Rong ultimately ended up compromising and picked Lulu.

With TTC's liveliest lane extinguished, even thirteen minutes into this game, nobody had died yet.

"Good news good news!" Xiao Bai acted like he was performing a skit in the voice chat. "Their bot lane duo are both missing their ults. This Lord Bai's finger is already on the flash, and the unrivaled unmissable life-stealing hook is also ready and prepared. There's only big profits to be made and wins to be had for all that come—the prerequisite being that you guys have to leave a kill for my P-baby, or else we'll have a rough time in the bot lane, thank you thank you."

Jian Rong sneered coldly. His "*what's the damn point of Dad going, to give you a shield?*" was already in his mouth.

Lu Boyuan finished off the three wolves that had just respawned. "Lulu, come."

Jian Rong swallowed down his curses. He cleared the minions in front of him before he gave himself a movement boost with a *whoosh*. The little sorceress gripped onto her staff with two hands and flew towards Nidalee, both feet leaving the ground.

They went to the bot lane. In the last season, Lu Boyuan's Nidalee had also been banned the vast majority of the time, but because Nidalee had been nerfed a round in this season, not many teams used her anymore. However, that round of nerfing clearly didn't affect Lu Boyuan.

Actually, strictly speaking, the opposing jungler's Graves made it over to the bot lane first. But before he could touch a single hair on Xiao Bai or

Pine's head, Lu Boyuan's javelin flew out from the brush like a bullet and landed on the enemy jungler at the max range possible—with a swish, Graves instantly lost over a third of his health!

Lu Boyuan rushed out from the brush with Jian Rong's speed boost and transformed into a cougar with his ult before he pounced straight onto Graves. Jian Rong followed closely behind him and first morphed Graves into a sheep, silencing his ability to cast skills. Then he used his Q to slow Graves down, allowing Lu Boyuan to crush him into the ground—

"First blood!"

Xiao Bai's scythe accurately latched onto the enemy support as he shouted, "Woooow—vanishing health technique!"

"Don't yell random things," Pine said. "Lantern."

The bot lane duo immediately matched their teammates' rhythm. After killing the opposing jungler, Lu Boyuan didn't plan on leaving. He instructed succinctly in the voice chat, "Tower dive, kill their bot lane."

As the tankiest support present, Xiao Bai was definitely going to use his own fleshy body to eat the damage from the enemy turret. He was also already very much used to doing this sort of thing for his teammates, and he thought that there was no way he would die with Lulu present. But a few seconds later—

"Shield! Shield shield shield! Jian Rong—I'm done for ahhhh!!!"

Half a second before his last sliver of health was going to be shredded away by the turret, Jian Rong finally gave him a shield, calmly and unhurriedly.

Xiao Bai managed to escape from the tower with an iota of health. Upon seeing that saving the situation was impossible, the enemy ADC promptly decided to forcefully trade a kill. His target was Xiao Bai, who only had a couple dozen HP left.

At death's door, Kalista used her flash and hurled a spear at Xiao Bai—

Xiao Bai shrieked, "This dog wants to trade me!! Jian Rong ult, ult! Give me your ult! Ahhhh I'm gonna die!!!"

Jian Rong frowned. "Stop screaming, my ears are gonna explode."

The moment the spear was about to pierce Xiao Bai, Jian Rong leisurely used his ult on him, enlarging and healing him, barely managing to save Xiao Bai's lowly life.

Lu Boyuan transformed back into a human and threw a javelin at the enemy before he turned around and left. Behind him, with a rustle, the enemy ADC responded by collapsing.

The stretched to the limit shield and ult, both of which Jian Rong had purposefully delayed giving until the very last second, nearly sent Xiao Bai on his way.

"Aren't you just playing Lulu mid for a single game…" As Xiao Bai hid in the underbrush and recalled to base, he looked behind him resentfully just in

time to see Jian Rong give Lu Boyuan a speed boost. He felt even more wronged. “P-baby, I also want a movement boost.”

Pine was in the middle of browsing through the shop in the base. “Where would I get a movement boost?”

Xiao Bai said, “I saw that your heal went off cooldown two seconds ago.”

Pine: “Keep dreaming.”

After toying with Xiao Bai, Jian Rong’s mood improved greatly. His staff swayed around in the air as he returned to the mid lane to continue clearing minions and farming.

Meanwhile, Lu Boyuan slipped straight into the enemy jungle.

Commentator A exclaimed, “Road has so much confidence in himself. Right after he threw the javelin, he instantly turned around confidently…”

Commentator B: “Logically speaking, if I’ve only missed one single javelin throw since the start of the game until now, I’d be even more self-confident than him… who would’ve expected that after Road missed the semifinals, his feeling for the game got better and better instead.”

Commentator C had already accepted the fact that Soft was taking the warmhearted route this round.

When he saw Lu Boyuan’s Nidalee slip into the jungle, he looked pitingly at PUD’s substitute jungler. “In the first place, Graves doesn’t kill monsters as fast as Nidalee does. Now that he died once from being counterganked,

doesn't that mean the bottom half of his jungle is basically gone… but it's no big deal. If they meet and 1v1, it's not like Graves can't do anything. He'll be fine as long as he can dodge God Lu's skills."

The consolation in the last part of his commentary was very obvious. After all, everyone knew that once Lu Boyuan pulled out a carry jungler and created an advantage in the early game through ganking, then congratulations to the opposing team's jungler—your jungle no longer existed.

Sure enough, after Graves revived, the only thing he could do was loudly sing "Empty[1]" to describe the bottom half of his jungle.

Currently, he was already one level behind Lu Boyuan, and while he was getting the blue buff, he was cautious to the point of dragging the monster as far away as he could.

He called out to his teammate, "Savior, come get the blue buff."

Savior: "Coming~"

98k paused briefly while clearing minions. "…don't copy the intonations that those netizens use."

Savior responded obediently, "Okay, *ge*."

Savior was having a great time in the laning phase of this game.

To be able to peacefully clear minions when laning against Soft without any smoke or chaos, that was something that wouldn't even happen in his

dreams. He found an unprecedented calm in this game, despite the fact that he was in the middle of the finals.

His happiness ended the moment his team's blue buff was stolen by one javelin throw from Road, who had been hiding in the brush behind them for quite a while.

"He was behind me that entire time?!" Tuotuo was greatly alarmed. "There's no way, right? Or else why wouldn't he sneak attack me earlier…"

98k immediately wanted to rush over to his teammates' aid, but he was stopped by one of Yuan Qian's skills. He couldn't free himself, and he knitted his brows. "Leave quickly—he wants to get a double kill!"

Savior reacted swiftly and instantly threw out a skill, wanting to daze Lu Boyuan. Lu Boyuan shifted to the left to avoid the attack and simultaneously tossed his javelin, causing Tuotuo to subconsciously use his blink skill—

The javelin stabbed into Tuotuo with a swish, and half his health disappeared in the blink of an eye—Lu Boyuan had predicted his movements.

Lu Boyuan gave a careless laugh. He was too familiar with Graves, and in this terrain, the range of possible movement was very limited. Even with his eyes closed, he would be able to tell where Tuotuo was going to go.

"It's fine." Savior remained calm and said in his clumsy Chinese, "Aye am here, no panic, we can trade him."

Tuotuo knew that there was no way he could escape this time without his flash. As a result, he dealt all the damage he could and cooperated with Savior's skills to grind Lu Boyuan's health down to a sliver before dying.

The screen abruptly went gray, and Tuotuo let out a sigh. Internally, he thought that trading him and Lu Boyuan this wave was actually a steal, since they would get surplus gold for killing Lu Boyuan. After this, his jungle should be a little safer…

Caught up in his thoughts, Tuotuo suddenly heard the sound of a flash—Jian Rong made it over in the nick of time and gave Lu Boyuan a shield while also silencing Savior. Nidalee transformed into a cougar and sprang straight onto Savior's face, killing him with one claw attack and getting a double kill.

They continued on their warpath. After killing the enemy mid laner and jungler, they headed straight for the top lane.

Seeing that they were on their way, Yuan Qian unhesitatingly used his ult and charged, successfully knocking 98k fiercely into the air!

When Lu Boyuan pounced on 98k, he didn't have much health left. Without even thinking about it, Jian Rong used his ult on Lu Boyuan before he silenced and slowed 98k. The three of them very bluntly killed off 98k and destroyed the top lane's outer turret—

Commentator A: "First turret down! Isn't TTC's rhythm really good in this game?!"

Commentator B: “It is. It goes without saying what God Lu’s rhythm is like when playing a carry jungler, but I didn’t expect that Soft would actually keep giving out shields. You know, when the shield skill is used on an enemy, it can deal damage—but he still chooses to give God Lu unlimited refills. Of course, this is a very good choice, because God Lu has extremely explosive DPS right now. One more second of survival means more pressure on their opponents!”

Commentator C: “I feel like Road and Soft have had excellent teamwork today. It’s clear from one glance that they frequently duo queue together in private to practice their tacit coordination.”

In this round, PUD’s carry jungler strategy failed miserably. Not only was Graves unable to help the other lanes, even his own farming became an enormous problem. Under the circumstances where there weren’t any wards around, he didn’t dare go after his own side’s monsters out of fear that Nidalee would leap out from the side in the middle of him fighting…

PUD’s most reliable top laner, 98k, was playing Ornn this game. Ornn wasn’t a carry champion, and he was also visited simultaneously by Lu Boyuan and Jian Rong in the early and mid game, so his farming wasn’t much better off than Yuan Qian’s. Pine and Xiao Bai were playing a Thresh and Kog’Maw duo, which was already an extremely threatening combo, and after Lu Boyuan helped them out in the early game, they easily suppressed the opposing bot lane duo. Meanwhile, because Savior couldn’t kill Lulu, he didn’t have an edge over Jian Rong either.

The first team fight finally erupted twenty-three minutes in. Lu Boyuan's long-range javelin throw consumed half of two enemy champions' health, after which Yuan Qian promptly used his ult and rushed towards the crowd. Even though he didn't hit anyone, he successfully forced out two flashes from the opposing team.

"Chaaarge my brothers!" Yuan Qian shouted with excitement. "Mid and support don't have flash! I tricked it out of them!!"

Lu Boyuan: "Beautiful."

Lu Boyuan seized the opportunity to switch into his cougar form before he flashed straight towards the enemy ADC and instantly oneshotted him with an extremely explosive melee combo!

The ADC was killed, but Lu Boyuan had also charged into the midst of the four enemies. PUD quickly recovered, and countless ults smashed towards Lu Boyuan—with a swoosh, Jian Rong used his ult on Lu Boyuan and protected him. Then, he gave his remaining shield and speed boost to Pine, who was behind himself!

Not only did Jian Rong's skill increase movement speed, it also increased attack speed.

Xiao Bai flashed and hooked onto Savior before he dashed over to him and slowed him down. Immediately after, he tossed a lantern over to Pine.

"P-baby go for it!" Xiao Bai said, "Bite them to death!!"

Pine rushed into the fight via Xia Bai's lantern. In coordination with Jian Rong's attack speed boost and his own skills, Kog'Maw opened his mouth wide and spewed balls of acid everywhere—

"Triple kill!"

"Nice! *Clap clap clap*!" Xiao Bai mimicked applause verbally before he said cryptically, "Twenty-three minutes in, congrats to our ADC for successfully getting our mid laner's shield one time!"

Jian Rong asked, "Is it violating the rules to betray your teammate in a match?"

"If you don't make it too obvious," Lu Boyuan answered, "No."

Xiao Bai: "Monitoring big brother, are you there? If you don't mind, could you please record this conversation for me? After the finals, I'm gonna ruin our mid laner's reputation because he bullies his teammates!"

Jian Rong: "It doesn't matter, I didn't have much of a reputation to begin with. Say whatever you want."

Xiao Bai: "In that case, my *ge* indulging your bullying of me is also a crime…"

Jian Rong: "If you want to fight me, then just say it. Let's go straight to the bathroom once the finals are over."

Xiao Bai: "I'm sorry."

The monitoring big brother: "……"

Would this team really be okay if they made it to Worlds?

PUD was already at a disadvantage, but that team fight directly established their loss. In the first place, Graves was an early game champion that consumed a lot of items. The moment he lost the advantage, he was useless.

Twenty-five minutes in, the second team fight began at Baron. The exact situation was that Xiao Bai wanted to place a ward next to Baron, but the opposing side misunderstood and thought that TTC was inflated to the point that they wanted to go for Baron. The five PUD members shot straight towards Xiao Bai, who turned tail and ran for two seconds before he suddenly whipped around and hooked onto the enemy ADC. Then he dashed into the crowd of enemies and used his ult, slowing and stopping three people from leaving—

I ran, but I was just pretending.

Xiao Bai's teammates stormed over from behind and hammered PUD into a team wipe before they promptly went for Baron and pushed PUD's base.

Twenty-eight minutes in, TTC grouped together and went for the Nexus. 98k wanted to have one last stand and successfully sent Pine flying with his ult —but because his teammates didn't have enough damage, they weren't able to follow up. Savior flashed in an attempt to ult and oneshot someone, but the instant he rushed forward, he was unexpectedly turned into a sheep and silenced by Jian Rong, proclaiming his death. A few seconds later, Yuan Qian finished him off.

Twenty-nine minutes in, TTC killed PUD's three damage dealers and destroyed their Nexus, winning the first round of the match.

Both teams left the stage to rest and prepare for the next game. When the camera panned over to TTC, each member wore a very natural and carefree expression.

Commentator A: "Congratulations to TTC for winning the first game—why do I feel like everyone in TTC seems particularly relaxed tonight?"

Commentator B: "Right? They don't look as serious or pressured as they did against Fighting Tiger."

Commentator C: "That's to be expected, since Road didn't play that time, just like PUD tonight… speaking of which, recently I've been seeing a lot of opinions about how veteran players have declined in strength and reaction speed. But in reality, it's also very important that a team has a veteran player with ample experience… and also, you really, really can't stake your carry jungler against Road's. You truly can't win against him. On the contrary, a slow and steady late game jungler like XIU actually has an easier time handling Road."

Once they were backstage, Ding-*ge* first gave them a perfunctory compliment of "*you guys played pretty well*" before he immediately launched into a discussion about the next game's tactics.

The five of them didn't even have any time to sit and rest on the couch for a bit. In order to hear what Ding-*ge* was saying, they stood very close together, almost shoulder to shoulder.

Lu Boyuan sensed the person next to him lean towards him a little, shifting some of his weight onto Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan looked down at him.

Jian Rong was listening with drooping eyelids, as if he was forcing himself to stay alert. Ultimately, he couldn't resist and yawned for the second time that night.

Some people said that yawns were also contagious. Right after, Xiao Bai yawned too, and then Yuan Qian uncontrollably opened his mouth as well —

Ding-*ge*: "…what? Should I deliver a few pillows onto the stage for you guys?"

Actually, Jian Rong wasn't exactly sleepy. It was just that he had cleared minions for over ten minutes and still only had one kill by the end of the game, so he was truly feeling a little lethargic and unexcited, even if it was the finals tonight.

He rubbed his face. "Is there Red Bull?"

Ding-*ge*: "No, I'll tell someone to go buy some… but it's definitely too late for the next round. Hang in there. They have the counterpick this time, so you don't need to play utility anymore, don't worry."

Jian Rong nodded before he straightened up and said, "I'm going to wash my face."

In the bathroom, Jian Rong vigorously splashed cold water onto his face. After several splashes, he still felt like it wasn't enough, and he lifted a hand, wanting to slap himself a few times. But before his hand could hit his face, someone grabbed onto his wrist.

"Harming yourself?" Lu Boyuan asked him with a raised eyebrow. He had entered the restroom at some unknown point in time and was standing next to Jian Rong, his face mostly expressionless.

"…no." Jian Rong was startled, and when he blinked, the water droplets on his eyelashes dripped everywhere. "I'm not in a very good condition right now."

Lu Boyuan asked, "Low blood sugar again?"

"No, definitely not," Jian Rong instantly said. "I have no problems competing, it's just… not super stimulating. I feel like I don't have enough energy."

Jian Rong wiped at the water on his face using his other hand before he asked, "Did Ding-*ge* send you to get me? Is it time to go on stage?"

"Not yet." Lu Boyuan said, "I came to find you."

Jian Rong was taken aback. "For what…"

Lu Boyuan said, "To help boost your energy."

Before Jian Rong could ask how, Lu Boyuan lifted him by the butt and placed him onto the sink counter.

When Lu Boyuan cupped the back of his neck and half-forced him to lean forward, Jian Rong didn't forget to ask, "The door—"

Lu Boyuan said, "It's locked."

In reality, it was only a very short kiss that lasted less than twenty seconds, yet Jian Rong felt as though his lips were about to be rubbed raw.

Someone knocked on the door. Lu Boyuan released him and asked lowly, "Is that a bit better?"

Jian Rong subconsciously swallowed, and the taste of coffee from Lu Boyuan's tongue flooded down his throat. Immediately, the tips of his ears reddened even more.

"Mn." Jian Rong jumped down from the sink and pulled out a paper towel to wipe his face. "Right now, I can take on ten Zhuang Yibais by myself."

Lu Boyuan laughed and reached out to tousle his hair.

Upon opening the door, Xiao Bai was standing outside, his face full of confusion and incredulity. "What the heck? You're in the public bathroom, why'd you lock the door? Who were you talking to on the phone, why do I feel like I heard my name? Also, what's wrong with your mouth, it's so red… *ai*, hang on, let me go to the bathroom first, I've been holding it in so bad. Wait one minute for me outside, okay, we can go back together—"

All of his words came to a halt the moment he saw his *ge*.

At first, Xiao Bai thought that his *ge* had snuck off to smoke. But unexpectedly, he was also here in the bathroom with Jian Rong, and they had locked the door too—why would they lock a public restroom's door?? That was really very immoral—but that wasn't the main fucking issue.

Looking at Xiao Bai's completely blank face, Lu Boyuan asked mildly, "Want us to wait?"

"……no need." Xiao Bai said, "I can go back by myself. You two, please go ahead."

Translation Notes

1. *This is a real song – Kong Kong Ru Ye (空空如也) by Ren Ran (任然)* ^

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 112: After the match, you can send me shampoo for two days (?)

The intermission wasn't very long, and the ten pro players soon returned to the stage. After a short wait, the game entered the second round's pick/ban phase.

PUD had clearly realized their mistake as well, and they no longer tried to compare carry junglers with Lu Boyuan. Instead, they pulled out a tankier Gragas jungle, who was great at engaging and splitting up the battlefield.

"Why isn't Tuotuo choosing his Lillia?" Ding-*ge* paced around behind them. "I've checked his ranked match history before, he's been playing Lillia a lot recently."

Yuan Qian said, "That champion is also more of a carry jungler. He couldn't really handle it in the last game, and he's probably a bit fearful now after being beaten up by Captain."

"That's true. These new pro players are actually quite fragile when it comes to coping with mental pressure. No matter how well Tuotuo played before, this is still his first time competing in the finals." After Ding-*ge* said that, he spotted his team's mid laner out of the corner of his eye. "Of course, not all newcomers are like that. There's one who can even feel sleepy when playing in the finals… Jian Rong, are you feeling a little better? A bit more energetic?"

Jian Rong sounded the same as usual. "I'm fine now."

Xiao Bai, sitting nearby: "…"

You're fine now.

But laozi is very much not fine.

Who would lock the main door while using a public restroom? Nobody, right? Normally people wouldn't do that, right?? Especially considering that there were two people inside—did his *ge* and Jian Rong have some secret strategy they had to discuss? Even if that were the case, they shouldn't have to avoid the rest of the team.

And his lips…

Jian Rong turned his head and squarely met Xiao Bai's gaze. "What? Is the champion select screen on my face?"

Xiao Bai said honestly, "Looking at you boosts my energy."

Jian Rong: "…"

As always, Ding-*ge* sought Lu Boyuan's opinion. "What jungler do you want to pick? Maybe try choosing Lillia? I noticed that you've been playing her a lot in ranked during the past few days, and you were doing pretty well on her too."

When Lillia was first released, she actually wasn't viewed very highly by the LPL. Everyone was of the opinion that she wasn't suited for pro play.

But Lillia still gained popularity quickly, specifically because the Korean pro players were extremely fond of her and their win rate with her was also

especially high. As a result, the LPL players also started picking her up.

However, Lillia didn't have a particularly outstanding track record in the LPL. Her win rate wasn't even 30%.

Lu Boyuan said, "Not Lillia."

A low win rate indicated that they still hadn't done enough research regarding the tactics best suited for Lillia jungle. He also hadn't really practiced Lillia's coordination with his teammates much, so there was no need to force himself to pick her.

In the end, Lu Boyuan chose Kindred. He glanced at 98k, who had locked in his signature champion Renekton, and said, "I'll mainly gank top this game. You guys watch out for yourselves."

Jian Rong had a brief discussion with Ding-*ge* before he locked in the champion that he had originally wanted to pick in the first place.

Commentator A: "Soft's going with Twisted Fate. Judging from the team comp, TTC's aiming for the early-mid game… however, Savior also got a hold of Orianna, the major late game champion he's best at. Now it all depends on if Soft can coordinate with his teammates in the early game to provide assistance."

At the beginning of the second game, Jian Rong wanted to peacefully clear minions with Savior, just like in the first round.

Twisted Fate was noted for being great at providing backup, since his ult allowed him to teleport anywhere within half the map. His disadvantage

was that he was very weak during the laning phase, and before he got his ult, the only thing he could do was farm.

But once he picked a champion like this one that was weak at laning, Savior wouldn't just foolishly trade blows with him either. As they cleared minions, Savior constantly approached Jian Rong and grinded away at his health.

Jian Rong remained calm and unfazed. He allowed Savior to throw skills onto his face and consume his health before he cheerfully turned around, used his blue card, cleared little minions, and restored his mana.

Commentator A: "Savior's throwing his ball at Soft again, can Soft restrain himself?! —okay, he restrained himself."

Commentator B: "And here I thought that he would play somewhat more fiercely this time, since he suffered so much holding himself back in the last game."

Commentator C: "Twisted Fate is already weak during the laning phase, so his playstyle is completely correct here. But he has his ult now, so next we'll have to see if he can provide assistance…"

As soon as he said that, the top lane started fighting.

98k was playing his signature champion, Renekton. On top of that, because of their defeat in the previous game, his desire to perform well wasn't much weaker than Jian Rong's. Consequently, his playstyle was extremely ferocious right off the bat, and he frequently came up to Yuan Qian to land some blows at the slightest disagreement.

Like always, Yuan Qian had chosen a team fighting champion, Gangplank. This champion had a skill where he consumed oranges to cleanse all crowd control from himself, so Yuan Qian wasn't in too bad of a spot.

Seeing that their captain was edging towards the top lane, Yuan Qian immediately started acting. He pretended to make a mistake with his positioning to lure Renekton forward, after which Renekton was trapped in the middle by Lu Boyuan, who had circled around from behind.

If this were someone else being pincered, they would've probably been finished within seconds. But ultimately, 98k's mechanics were still excellent, and he dragged on the fight long enough for his team's jungler to rush over.

Commentator A: "The top lane is currently in a 2v2! Honestly, it's hard to say who the winner of this fight will be. 98k has great mechanics, but his health is already mostly gone. At the same time, Yuan Qian's mana is very low, and it doesn't look like he can use many more skills. That's why I still think that PUD—"

Right as he said that, an eye appeared above every PUD member's head—Twisted Fate's ult.

Commentator B: "Soft used his ult! He just finished fighting with Savior, so he has less than 300 HP and only enough mana for one skill. Any random blow from Renekton can end him—also, Savior is right next to him, he still has the guts to teleport?!"

Commentator C: "Is there anything he doesn't have the guts to do??"

Savior promptly informed his teammates in their voice chat about Jian Rong, and 98k instantly changed the plan. “Tuo, kill Soft. If he dies now, the mid lane will directly collapse.”

Tuotuo: “Got it!”

Twisted Fate chose to teleport straight into the middle of the top lane fight. The second Jian Rong landed, 98k seized the opportunity to unleash a combo—

Thunk!

Twisted Fate abruptly froze and turned gold, becoming a target that was invulnerable to all damage. 98k’s attacks disappeared into the void.

Commentator A: “Touch – down – Hour – glass!!! Soft tricked out all of 98k’s skills! 98k can’t recover from that and is immediately swept away by God Lu! Tuotuo still has a lot of health right now and clearly wants to trade Soft…”

Twisted Fate’s W skill allowed him to pick a card. There were three different-colored cards in total, and the gold card could stun the enemy. Typically when ganking or getting a kill, this card would always be used.

The rotation sequence of the cards was red, gold, then blue. It appeared to be very easy to cycle between them, but that actually wasn’t the case—the first card shown was random.

This skill was an extreme test of a player’s reaction speed. There were often some Twisted Fate players who teleported over a great distance to get to

the bot lane, only to pull out a mana-restoring blue card… this was the same as going down there to put on a comedic skit for the enemies.

As the commentators were talking, Jian Rong's Zhonya's Hourglass ended. He promptly used his W skill and a blue card popped up over his head—before anyone could recover, with two swishes, he swiftly cycled through the deck to the gold card. Then he slapped it onto Gragas, who had charged towards him using a blink skill, and rooted him solidly to the spot!

The commentators finally found the time to exclaim over Jian Rong's play only after Tuotuo's death was announced.

Yuan Qian got a kill this time, which meant that laning would become much easier from here on out.

He recalled to base with satisfaction and praised brightly, "Amazing, Xiao Rong. Truly a hand speed worthy of being single for twenty years."

Jian Rong: "…"

Pine saw that he had ten-plus more minions kills than the opposing ADC. In a rather good mood, he corrected evenly, "Eighteen years."

Yuan Qian said, "Close enough, close enough. There's only two years between eighteen and twenty…"

Lu Boyuan suddenly asked lazily, "He can stay single all the way until he's twenty?"

Yuan Qian hadn't expected for Lu Boyuan to suddenly speak up out of nowhere. He let out an "*ah*" and said, "Probably? Look at how hard he goes at practice every day, where would he meet a young lady…"

"No." Jian Rong denied flatly. "I can't stay single all the way until I'm twenty."

There was a note of laughter in Lu Boyuan's voice. "I think so too."

Yuan Qian: "?"

Xiao Bai: "……?"

Compared to the easygoing, pleasant atmosphere over at TTC, PUD's side was much more serious.

Tuotuo said in a small voice, "It's my fault. I came late, or else we would've been able to kill Yuan Qian."

"It was indeed your fault." What 98k said was criticizing, but his tone of voice was as calm as ever. "I said that Road would come gank me, but you were still focused on getting those two Krugs. Don't make the same mistake next time."

Tuotuo choked up. "…okay."

"It's alright~" Savior comforted him. "*Ge* is only pointing out your mistake, he isn't angry at you~ Keep it up."

Jian Rong also got a kill in the top lane, allowing him to provide assistance even more effortlessly.

The second time Xiao Bai's hook stole a kill from him, Jian Rong's Twisted Fate halted in place for a second.

This momentary pause alarmed Xiao Bai. "What? As a hardworking, self-sacrificial, pitiful little support, do I not deserve to get a kill? If I don't have gold, who's gonna put down control wards for you guys? If I don't have items, who's gonna protect you guys from the wind and rain…"

Jian Rong: "Over all these years, how have you been tolerating him?"

Xiao Bai: "?"

Pine: "Once the contract ends, switch teams and supports."

"Impossible." Xiao Bai readily overruled him. "If you dare to betray me, I'll climb on top of you, restrain you by the waist, and crush you to death inside TTC's base."

Pine missed a cannon minion and instantly felt like he was a dumbass for joining in on their exchange.

Because none of PUD's lanes were off to a good start in the early game, they kept avoiding team fights to farm in the mid game. But TTC wasn't going to allow them to just drag it out; using the drakes, they forced two team fights and created a small advantage for themselves.

Twenty-seven minutes in, Orianna's time to shine arrived. Savior flashed and used his ult to oneshot Pine and Jian Rong, helping his teammates win a team fight with great difficulty. However, TTC still had the lead.

Thirty minutes in, Jian Rong coordinated his ult with Yuan Qian to oneshot PUD's support, Dundun, who came to the jungle to place a ward. Lu Boyuan saw that Savior was currently in the bot lane killing minions, and he decisively called his teammates over to go for Baron.

Two PUD members rushed over to try and steal Baron—but that was truly a bit too naive of them to think that they could steal Baron from Lu Boyuan. TTC easily got the kill and simultaneously sent Gragas, who went into the pit to steal Baron, back to his base for free.

Thirty-three minutes in, TTC forced a team fight in the mid lane. They took down the enemy's inhibitor and won the team fight, trading three PUD members for one TTC member.

Thirty-six minutes in, PUD hurried over to prevent TTC from getting the Dragon Soul. The two teams traded blows and fought for almost a minute near the Baron pit before Yuan Qian found an opportunity and fed the enemies his ult head-on. He successfully got a triple kill, after which they headed straight for the enemy's base.

Thirty-eight minutes in, TTC endured against Orianna's pressure and destroyed PUD's Nexus.

The score was currently 2:0. TTC was the first to reach match point in this spring season finals.

With two consecutive wins, the pressure on TTC was at its absolute lowest.

Ding-*ge* was already much more relaxed—as long as they won one of the next three games, this match would end, and he had a lot of confidence in

his players.

“All you have to do is maintain this same feeling for the game. PUD will most likely go all out in the next round, so each lane should be a bit more careful.” Done with his instructions, Ding-*ge* appropriately encouraged his team members. “If we win the finals, everyone can get two days off once we get back and have a nice rest…”

Xiao Bai cried, “Only two days?!”

“MSI is being held in Korea next month, how many days do you want to take off?! Two days is already a lot!” Ding-*ge* continued, “Also, as Fu-*ge* said before, he’ll be giving each person a car if we win… he’s watching the match from the US right now. He called me earlier and said that he’s been in contact with the car manufacturer, so you can do what you will with that.”

That last part was undoubtedly the biggest encouragement for the TTC members. On the way to the stadium, Xiao Bai had already started considering what kind of air freshener scent he should put in his car to make it seem high-class.

Someone suddenly nudged Jian Rong’s shoulder, and he turned his head.

Lu Boyuan asked lowly, “Thinking about the car?”

“No, I’m thinking about the upcoming game.” Jian Rong said truthfully, “I don’t have my driver’s license, so there’s no point in thinking about that.”

Lu Boyuan said, “Go get it after MSI.”

“We’ll see… if I have time. I’ll have to pick a driving school too, annoying.”

“Why do you have to go to driving school?”

Jian Rong was startled. “How do I learn if I don’t go to driving school?”

Lu Boyuan glanced at the camera hovering near them and said, “I’ll teach you.”

“…”

“I know a professional instructor, and I’ll help you practice driving on the road. You can start learning whenever you want to, I’ll take care of the training vehicle too.” Lu Boyuan said quietly, “Also, I don’t scold my students. Yes or no?”

With no hesitation, Jian Rong said, “Yes.”

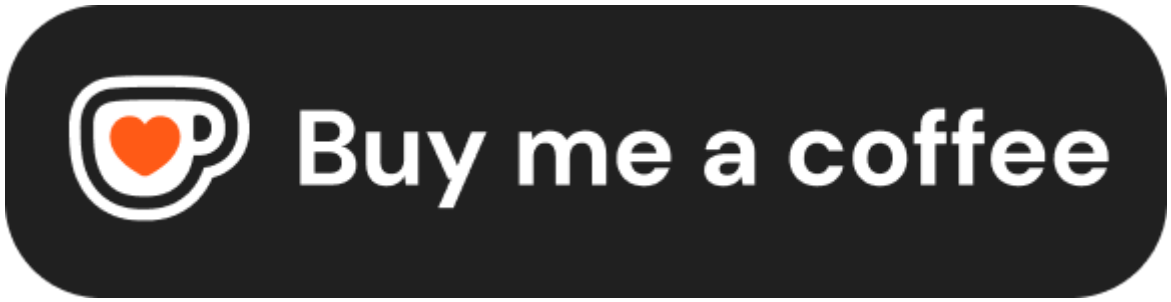
Lu Boyuan hummed. “As for the tuition…”

Jian Rong instantly asked, “How much money?”

Lu Boyuan shot him a look, amused.

The arena was merely a step away. In front of the camera, Lu Boyuan reached out to pinch Jian Rong’s ear and said something coded that the cameraman couldn’t understand.

“I won’t take your money.” Lu Boyuan asked him, “After the match, you can send me shampoo for two days, how about that?”



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ICDI Chapter 113: Our first championship win.

Thanks to twinkle for the Ko-fi!*

After getting back on stage, Jian Rong twisted open his water bottle and took a big gulp of water.

Shampoo… dammit.

Two days? In Lu Boyuan's room? The others probably wouldn't be practicing during those two days either. They wouldn't be discovered, right?

…he could sleep in his room both days?

The game entered the pick/ban phase. Jian Rong immediately shut off those unhealthy thoughts in his mind and ruffled his hair before he straightened up and got serious.

Just as Ding-*ge* had said, PUD regrouped for the third game and pulled out the team fight composition that they had been drilling the most recently.

Yuan Qian looked at the champions that the other team had picked. "Morgana? Didn't they already take Rakan support… unless it's Morgana mid?"

Strictly speaking, Morgana was a support champion with a fair amount of CC. She even had a shield that could both block some magic damage and provide crowd control immunity during the designated time frame.

This champion could also be played mid, but just like Jian Rong's Lulu from the first game, it was a timid champion that could only wait for the late game and team fights.

Ding-*ge* hovered around behind them. "It's probably something new they've been practicing."

Xiao Bai sighed, moved. "For the sake of the team, Savior really is willing to play anything."

Jian Rong scoffed coldly.

"—but he still can't compare with our mid laner. Despite being such a magnificent, incomparable hunk, our mid laner is still willing to play healer Lulu for my *ge*—for the team. In the future, this touching deed must be memorialized in our championship documentary with a segment that's ten minutes long at the very least. And there has to be a voice-over going on in the back too." Xiao Bai instantly spouted off a whole bunch of fawning flattery. "Soft, badass!"

The entire team started laughing.

Lu Boyuan watched as the opposing team successively chose Sion, Miss Fortune, and Lillia, but his smile didn't fade. "Prepare yourselves, their team fight comp is extremely strong this time."

Commentator A: "Tuotuo picked Lillia—he hasn't really competed much this season, so people most likely don't know that Lillia is the champion Tuotuo has been playing the most these past few months in ranked.

However, since his carry jungler didn't do so hot in the first game, I thought that we wouldn't be able to see him play Lillia today."

Commentator B shook his head. "The only thing I want to say is that a single match truly doesn't mean much. Remember how badly Soft's Fizz was suppressed the first time he went up against Fighting Tiger? But the second time he played against them, he still dared to pull out Fizz. Logically speaking, Fizz isn't actually a champion that should be played competitively in this meta, but Soft is the classic example of someone absolutely refusing to give up—I really like pro players like him."

Commentator C nodded in agreement as the camera cut to Jian Rong, who was expressionlessly and calmly clearing minions. Commentator C chuckled and said, "Speaking of which, Soft also only joined the LPL this season, yet he's made it straight to the finals right away… it gives off the same feeling from back when Road was younger. What's more, I've discovered that regardless if they win or lose, he's extremely composed, at least on the surface."

Commentator A maintained his smile. "But of course. After all, Soft is a rare talent who can 'communicate amicably' with tens of thousands of barrage comments all on his own. What hasn't he seen in his streams before?"

Jian Rong was unaware that they were currently talking about him. The instant he entered the game, he saw Savior type in the chat.

[PUD, Savior: T-T]

Jian Rong lifted an eyebrow. “You can interact with each other in chat during a match?”

“As long as you don’t flame anyone.” Lu Boyuan said, “They record the screen for the pro player first person POV videos, so everyone can see what’s in the chat after the match ends.”

[TTC · Soft: Morgana?]

[PUD, Savior: Let’s clear minions peacefully *ge*~ ^^]

“What a good state of mind, he can still smile even after losing two games.” Xiao Bai sighed. “If that were me, I would probably already be thinking about which room to live in after our base is moved underground.”

“No, you’re just saying that because you haven’t seen Savior stream before.” As Yuan Qian killed minions, he said, “Back when he was being cyberbullied by Korean netizens, he would type out this kind of emoji even while wiping away his tears.”

Jian Rong: “…”

Xiao Bai: “…he can’t possibly be crying over there at this very moment, right?”

Naturally, Savior wasn’t crying.

Although his ability to endure was relatively weak in some aspects, he was already a very mature pro player on the stage.

He had played in almost as many matches in Korea as Pine had overall, and he was well aware of the fact that before a match ended, all negative emotions were meaningless.

PUD had prepared extremely well for this game—the money they had spent on practice matches with Korean teams wasn't for nothing.

In the early game, PUD kept avoiding team fights. Jian Rong was playing Syndra, and right as he was about to solo kill Savior at level 6, Tuotuo appeared in the nick of time and saved Savior before leaving at once. He didn't even think about countering Jian Rong, staying almost excessively steadfast.

The other two lanes were also very quiet.

"98k is harmoniously clearing minions with me…" Yuan Qian wore a complicated expression. "I suddenly sort of understand what Savior must have been feeling in the first game."

"Their bot lane is the same. They're not coming out to fight us even with Rakan, a support with such strong CC." Xiao Bai frowned. "That means they're determined to drag this out to the mid-late game. I feel like we've fallen into their rhythm."

As he said that, Lu Boyuan solo killed Lillia.

After getting the kill, Lu Boyuan went for the Rift Scuttler nearby before he calmly recalled to base. "Search for opportunities, don't panic. We can also team fight."

The first 5v5 team fight finally broke out, and PUD's team fight advantage was displayed—with so much crowd control, as long as one skill landed, it was inescapable.

Savior's Morgana first rooted Xiao Bai in place, who was on his way to place a ward. The support, Rakan, immediately followed up with more CC and caught Pine as he was attempting to give Xiao Bai a heal. The rest of TTC swiftly rushed over, but Savior found a chance to flash into the group and use his ult, successfully stunning three TTC members. Then, 98k arrived late and entered the fight with his ult. All the way up until Xiao Bai's screen went gray, he was unable to leave his dazed state—

In the end, TTC's bot lane duo and Jian Rong all ended up falling under the powerful onslaught of the enemy ADC Miss Fortune's bullets.

In the second team fight, Tuotuo's Lillia was the first to be sacrificed.

But before he died, he used his ult to send four TTC members to sleep. His teammates followed up and traded four TTC players for one of their own, putting TTC directly at a major disadvantage. The remaining four PUD members instantly seized the opportunity to go for Baron.

In the first place, it was difficult to deal with this kind of team composition during team fights, and it only became harder once they were at the disadvantage.

During the final wave, Jian Rong flashed and tried to find a chance to oneshot the enemy ADC. A second later, Savior promptly flashed with him

and gave his team's ADC a shield, successfully blocking Jian Rong's stun, allowing the enemy ADC to flash and escape.

This flash trapped Jian Rong amidst the enemies, and he ultimately ended up collapsing in the crowd.

Without their mid laner, it was even tougher for TTC to resist. After wiping out TTC, PUD tore down their Nexus and won the third game of the match, arduously dragging the score to 2:1.

Back at the break room, the first thing Jian Rong said was, "The last wave was my fault."

"It had nothing to do with you," Ding-*ge* analyzed calmly. "By that point, we already couldn't beat them in a team fight. If you didn't look for openings, then you could only wait to die. You seized the opportunity very well in that fight, their ADC couldn't even react in time. But Morgana was there, so there was no helping it.

"Also, it's not like PUD is a weak team. Although their starting jungler isn't present, it would still be difficult to beat them three to nothing. It's fine, we have a lot of chances. Right now, PUD should be the ones panicking."

Jian Rong didn't speak. He sat on the sofa and stared at the floor, lost in thought.

He felt like every time he made a mistake, there was no excusing it. If his APM had been a little faster, and he had landed his skill before Savior could give a shield, perhaps the outcome of that last wave would've been different.

Someone touched his cheek. Lu Boyuan was standing next to him, and he first pressed the back of his hand against Jian Rong's face before he flipped his hand over, revealing the candy sitting on his palm.

Lu Boyuan asked, "Feeling bad after just losing one game?"

"No." Jian Rong took the candy, tore open the wrapper, and tossed it in his mouth, making one of his cheeks bulge up. "In the next game, I'm going to make their ADC pay for the amount of times he should've died last round."

His poor condition from the first game was gone. Currently, even Jian Rong's palms were burning.

When they went back on stage, the atmosphere in the stadium felt more enthusiastic than before—PUD had turned the tables in the previous game, finally allowing their long dispirited fans to regain some vigor.

It was obvious that PUD wanted to go down the same route as last time. Right off the bat, they banned three jungle champions—Lee Sin and two carry junglers, Graves and Nidalee.

Xiao Bai couldn't help but curse. "Damn, are they not even considering our other lanes?"

Yuan Qian: "Their jungler's rhythm in the early game was almost messed up by Captain last time, so they're definitely going to target him in the ban phase this round… they probably think that as long as our jungler can't do anything, they'll be able to smoothly drag out the game till the team fights start."

Ding-*ge*'s first instinct was to look at Jian Rong's computer monitor.

Sure enough, Jian Rong was scowling as he scrolled through the champion select screen. After he found the champion that he was searching for, he stopped.

Without saying anything else, Ding-*ge* reached out and pressed a hand down on Jian Rong's shoulder. He got straight to the point and asked, "If you pick this champion, can you carry?"

Jian Rong paused. Then, he crushed the candy in his mouth and said flatly, "If I don't carry this game, I'll renew my contract for free next season."

"Don't be like that." Yuan Qian immediately said, "You're still young, you don't know how important it is to save up money for your wife…"

"It's impossible for me to lose." After Jian Rong said that, there was a beat of silence before he continued, "Also, I don't plan on having a wife."

"…" Yuan Qian was shocked. "Didn't you say that you're definitely not going to be single by the time you're twenty?!"

"What does not being single have to do with getting a wife?"

Xiao Bai: "?"

Yuan Qian: "……are you that scummy?"

Jian Rong realized in retrospect what his words sounded like. He went quiet for a second before he finally said ambiguously, "Never mind… it's hard to explain."

…

Commentator A: “PUD’s intentions are very obvious: they’re aiming to team fight. TTC’s fixed ban list includes 98k’s Volibear and one of the current favored meta champions, Varus. I recommend that the final ban spot goes to Morgana, this champion’s shield is too annoying—as expected, they banned Morgana, but there’s still no way to restrict PUD’s team fight setup. Even without Morgana, Savior can still use Orianna… hm?”

Just as Commentator A was in the middle of his fervent analysis, the camera abruptly honed in on both teams’ junglers.

On a certain Tieba forum, someone had once joked that the junglers who competed against TTC were all very tragic. It was one thing if they couldn’t beat Road in the jungle, but every time the camera focused on both junglers simultaneously, it was basically public humiliation.

At that moment, the man who was usually mostly expressionless during matches suddenly laughed.

By contrast, Tuotuo seemed particularly pitiful displayed next to him with his thick glasses and a face full of adolescent acne…

“…God Lu is so handsome.” Commentator A coughed. “Okay, next up, let’s see what champion TTC will go for in their first pick—LeBlanc!! Soft’s LeBlanc is coming out!!”

Commentator B: “That’s what I guessed would happen. After all, Soft does indeed play his LeBlanc very well. But in a situation like this, where the other

team forcefully drags things out to the late game, is LeBlanc truly appropriate?"

Jian Rong quickly used his actions to let everyone know exactly whether or not LeBlanc was appropriate.

Seven minutes into the game, right as the camera switched to the top lane to watch their scuffle, a kill announcement sounded—

Soft solo killed Savior in lane!

The kill was replayed, and everyone saw Orianna recalling to base between the first and second turrets. LeBlanc had just grinded down half of Orianna's health. Two seconds before Savior finished channeling, a figure slipped out from the brush next to him!

LeBlanc, who was seemingly clearing minions merely a second earlier, suddenly blinked with her W and smashed directly onto Orianna. Then, Jian Rong instantly swept Orianna away with a well-practiced Ignite Q-R-E, his APM almost faster than the speed at which the commentators talked—

"Wait a moment?!" Commentator A was astonished. "Savior cleared all his minions before going back to base, so Soft shouldn't have any vision here whatsoever? How did Soft know that Savior was here?! And to top it off, he didn't even bother looking before he used that self-confident W skill to step straight onto Savior's face…"

This scene was also witnessed by Xiao Bai, who was slacking off and observing his teammates because nothing was happening in the bot lane. "Amazing—how did you know that Savior was there??"

Jian Rong said succinctly, “Captain showed me his videos before.”

Nobody obtained their accomplishments easily. There were many, many match recordings saved on Lu Boyuan’s tablet; normally when his teammates were watching variety shows, Lu Boyuan was always watching recordings.

Xiao Bai was startled. “*Ge*, this is preferential treatment!”

“It isn’t.” Lu Boyuan explained simply, “He was next to me when I was watching PUD’s videos, so I just mentioned it to him in passing.”

Xiao Bai frowned. “When did this happen? Was I not there?”

Jian Rong said, “The semi…”

The semifinals, that night.

He was extremely drowsy at the time, leaning against Lu Boyuan as he slowly fell asleep. While playing with Jian Rong’s hair, Lu Boyuan told him that Savior had a bad habit when recalling to base: he liked to do so near the tower, next to the brush on the right. He had gone back to base four games in a row at that spot.

Lu Boyuan had brought it up casually, but Jian Rong remembered it.

That was why he thought of going over to test it out. In any case, LeBlanc was an agile champion. It would be best if he caught Savior, but if he didn’t, he could still double back the way he came.

Xiao Bai: “Semi-what?”

Jian Rong: "…what's it have to do with you? Come to mid and place a ward for me."

Xiao Bai was dumbfounded. "Is this how you ask someone for a favor?!"

"If you don't place a control ward, how am I supposed to gank the bot lane?" Jian Rong asked, "I don't need to go anymore?"

"I'm coming *ge*, I'll even place two for you, one control ward and one stealth ward. As long as Savior goes the slightest bit astray, immediately crush him to death in the jungle!"

Soon after, Jian Rong made a trip to the bot lane. He helped his teammates force out all of their enemies' flashes and heals before leaving.

However, for a bot lane duo like PUD's who farmed under the tower, it wasn't too important if they didn't have their Summoner Spells.

Twenty minutes in, Lu Boyuan solo killed Tuotuo in the jungle. There had only been two kills so far in the entire game.

Commentator A: "*Ss*, how do I put this… even though currently TTC has the advantage, this tiny lead in gold isn't actually too helpful during team fights. After all, PUD is using a team fight crowd control strategy, so if a single member of TTC is CC'd, then they're basically done for…"

Commentator B: "That's correct, and it's evident that TTC is attempting to find opportunities. Now we just have to wait and see how both teams will handle the drake team fight in a bit."

Not too long after Commentator B said that, the first team fight erupted at last between the two teams.

From above and below the dragon pit respectively, the two teams traded blows and restricted each other. Abruptly, the enemy ADC Ashe shot her ice arrow ult straight at Pine from below.

If that arrow was able to stun Pine, then 98k would instantly use his ult and charge into TTC's huddle to disrupt their formation, while also looking for a chance to oneshot Pine.

Unfortunately, with a clatter—Xiao Bai, who was on the lookout for openings nearby, dashed to Pine using Braum before he lifted his shield and blocked Ashe's CC for Pine!

Before the commentators could praise him, they heard an announcement ring out in a female voice—Jian Rong had killed the enemy Ashe.

"What's going on?!" Commentator A gripped his headset. "Ashe's positioning—he's standing in the middle of PUD's formation! How did Soft go in and kill him???"

PUD's team damage output was already a bit lacking. After their ADC died, they decisively chose not to stay any longer, and the remaining four unanimously retreated.

But then Yuan Qian's Gangplank waved his hand, and the cannonballs from his ult slammed onto PUD, dealing damage and significantly slowing them! Lu Boyuan's Kindred followed up right away, and he used his E skill to

completely strangle to death any thoughts Savior might have had about escaping.

During that team fight, three PUD members were pursued and killed. Meanwhile, TTC was utterly untouched, and they even went back to where the fight first started to take a drake.

Everything just now had happened too fast. After the team fight concluded, the broadcast immediately replayed it all, and everyone could finally see how Jian Rong was able to oneshot the enemy ADC—

He had circled around alone to the slope on PUD's left to place a ward down. Before PUD's support could even realize where this ward had freaking come from, Jian Rong had already discerned the enemy's formation. A second later, he unhesitantly triggered the Blast Cone and exploded himself down the slope. Then, he rushed to Ashe with a W dash and got a beautiful solo kill, after which he promptly flashed and ran away…

The three commentators tacitly went silent for two seconds.

Commentator B, who had just asked "*is LeBlanc truly appropriate?*" a short while ago, said pensively, "Soft's LeBlanc, always a god."

PUD was thoroughly put at a disadvantage.

Due to their team composition, they were no match for TTC during the laning phase. Now that they couldn't even win the team fights, PUD only had one path left—drag it out to the late game, obtain Mythic items, and search for opportunities.

In the end, PUD had still undergone basic training before, so no matter how TTC played, they couldn't wipe PUD. Savior's Orianna stayed eternally under the tower and cleared minions especially quickly. In addition, their team composition in and of itself had a lot of crowd control… as a result, even though TTC had the advantage, they were continuously unable to take down the mid lane inhibitor.

After consecutively clearing the second turrets in PUD's top and bot lanes, TTC went back to the base to replenish health. Only Lu Boyuan was left as he cleared PUD's monsters on his own.

At that moment, PUD made an astonishing decision—all five of them snuck towards Baron.

Commentator A: "PUD is going for Baron!!!"

Commentator B was stunned. "Yes, they are. *Ai*, I feel like… I feel like they have a chance here! The wards Xiao Bai placed earlier are already gone, and he didn't get to replace them yet. Currently, except for God Lu, everyone else in TTC has recalled to base—"

Commentator C: "They're doing it!!!"

It was already the mid-late game, so it didn't take PUD very long to fight Baron.

The commentators and spectators held their breath as they watched PUD's five members fight Baron. Meanwhile, TTC had only just left their base!

Baron's health dropped unceasingly. 70% HP, 50% HP, 30%…

Right as Commentator A's "*success!*" was about to spill out from his mouth, Lu Boyuan, who was in the middle of recalling to base, suddenly canceled his channeling. Then—he turned around and walked towards the Baron pit.

Kindred's farsight ward illuminated the Baron pit. Lu Boyuan had discovered PUD's plot, but Baron's health was too low, and there was no way it would last until the remaining TTC members arrived.

PUD rapidly destroyed the farsight ward, and the Baron pit went dark again.

Commentator A: "This… is God Lu trying to steal it?"

Commentator B: "How could he steal it? He doesn't have any vision, he doesn't know how much HP Baron has, and if he jumps in too early or late, he'll die…"

Just as he said that, Lu Boyuan attacked the Blast Cone and jumped into the pit. Then, a dragon's roar sounded—

[TTC · Road has stolen Baron Nashor!]

The second after the dragon roared—the entire stadium screamed!

The number of comments in the broadcast barrage skyrocketed, to the point that all the channels started lagging!

The commentators' voices nearly went hoarse. "God Lu, in—credible!!!!"

TTC's voice chat was also exploding.

Lu Boyuan's ult delayed long enough for his teammates to rush to the scene, still yelling. Because PUD already wasn't in a good condition from fighting Baron, this was equivalent to catching a turtle in a jar as TTC sealed off PUD's line of retreat and beat them up—

The Baron steal changed the game. PUD was ruthlessly wiped out, and the five TTC members charged towards PUD's Nexus.

The instant PUD's Nexus exploded, someone slammed their fist heavily down on their keyboard.

The cheers rose again and again.

Sparks went off in Yuan Qian's head. He tugged off his headphones and turned, wanting to hug Xiao Bai—

Xiao Bai had his arms wrapped firmly around Pine's neck. "P-baby ahhhhhh!!!!!!!"

Yuan Qian sniffled and turned his head in the other direction, heart filled with exhilaration, wanting to hug their captain who had just stolen Baron for them—

Jian Rong was hugging Lu Boyuan extremely tightly.

They were pressed almost completely against each other. He didn't know if his arms would hurt Lu Boyuan's neck, but he truly couldn't help himself. He felt as if all the blood in his body was boiling and howling, and he gripped Lu Boyuan's clothing so tightly that wrinkles appeared—

The team's staff rushed excitedly onto the stage. Countless familiar voices sounded behind them, and with a *bang*, golden confetti began sprinkling down over the stadium.

At first, Jian Rong had thought: this was only the spring season, which wasn't all that important, so even if they ended up winning, there wasn't anything much to it.

But at that moment, he was speechless with how electrified he felt.

After some unknown amount of time passed, he finally said to Lu Boyuan, "We won."

His voice trembled a little.

He was embraced in return.

Unlike Jian Rong's hug, Lu Boyuan was very gentle, and he pressed a hand against Jian Rong's head.

"Mn." Lu Boyuan said, "You and I… our first championship win."

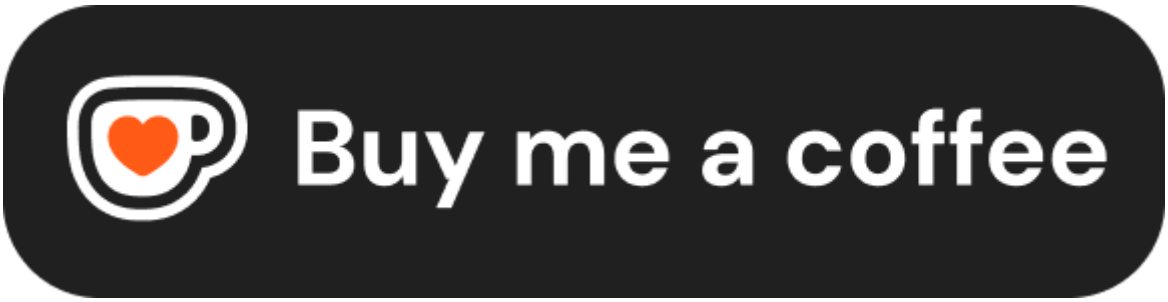
—

The author has something to say:

I did a lot of research but still couldn't figure out if you can interact with each other using all chat in a match. So, just pretend like you can!

Yan: Baby's first championship win!!!!!!!!!!! Very proud dad moment *wipes tear*

Wei: Yay go TTC!!!! Also rip Yuan Qian forever 5th wheeling ahaha



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ICDI Chapter 114: .

Yuan Qian sniffled and waited at the side for his teammates' hugs.

He glanced to the left and right, but neither side seemed to have any intention of letting go, so he helplessly paced around a little. Just as the thought "*haven't they been hugging for a bit too long*" popped up in his head, he was hugged by Ding-*ge*, who had rushed onto the stage.

After the conclusion of a match, the camera always belonged to the winners, and this scene was completely captured by the surrounding cameras.

The livestream barrage briefly spammed "*TTC is amazing*" for a while before it was led astray by that scene—

[Watching God Lu steal Baron instantly got me pregnant ahhh—]

[Savior is crying, so pitiful ah *wuwu* T-T, don't cry PUD we'll be back next year! And congrats TTC!!!]

[Soft really is gonna go to Korea to bury Rish…]

[They've been hugging for one minute twenty seconds now, hah, isn't that enough.]

[What's going on what's going on?? Xiao Bai, do you wanna squeeze Pine to death?!]

[Damn! Road's hand is on my son's butt!!!?]

[Soft is about to rip a hole in my husband's shirt…]

[Pure dad fan here, this is my first time following LoL esports thanks to my son. I wanted to ask, when other teams won championships in the past, did they also hug each other like this? I haven't even hugged my wife this tightly before.]

[Isn't Qian-*ge* the only winner of life in the team with a girlfriend? How come he looks even more tragic right now than those single dogs hahahahahahaha]

In the end, Jian Rong let go only because Ding-*ge* patted them on the shoulders and told them to go hold the trophy.

Jian Rong's cheeks were flushed with excitement, and his eyes shined. On his way to the center of the stage, he licked his lips quite a few times.

The five of them gathered around the trophy. As the host's voice and the audience's innumerable screams and shouts sounded around them, they lifted up the trophy together.

After that, regarding how they got off stage, how he hugged his other teammates, how he stuffed his peripherals into his bag… Jian Rong didn't remember much of it at all. For a brief period of time, he felt like he was floating, and it was only once he was seated for the post-match interview that he was dragged back down to reality by the flashing cameras.

The five TTC members sat side by side, in as formal a setting as the post-game press conferences held for the NBA or the World Cup.

“Why’re they making the spring season such a big deal this year?” Yuan Qian was astonished. “This is the kind of show they only put on for last year’s Worlds.”

“Don’t ask. The answer is that the LPL’s market value is growing year after year.” Ding-*ge* smiled at the reporters and said quietly, “Alright, it’s about to start.”

Although the press conference seemed impressive, ultimately the same old questions were still being asked. The majority of the questions were related to the match, interspersed occasionally with a few personal ones.

This was nothing new to most of the TTC members. Even Pine had competed in Worlds twice already, and he answered the questions skillfully and easily. On top of that, at their core they were all a bunch of video game nerds, so they were far less comfortable talking face to face with reporters compared to streaming in front of their computers. As a result, none of them had much to say, including Xiao Bai, who gave standard responses to the questions and left it at that.

When it was Lu Boyuan’s turn, a reporter asked, “As a senior, what are your thoughts on PUD’s new jungler, Tuotuo, and his performance tonight?”

Lu Boyuan replied concisely, “Not bad.”

“What about compared to your old rival, XIU?”

“A bit lacking.” Lu Boyuan said mildly, “But if he continues to mess around and constantly send me bothersome texts, it probably won’t be long before he’s replaced by this newcomer.”

The reporter couldn't help it, and a laugh burst out of her before she choked it back again. "Okay… then, one last question. The fans are actually all very interested in your romantic relationship. Since today is such a happy occasion, would you be able to reveal a little something to everyone?"

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow and fell silent for a while.

Right as the reporter thought that he wasn't going to respond and was about to tell him "*it's fine if you don't want to say anything*"—

"They have short hair." Lu Boyuan paused briefly before adding, "And it's dyed."

The room went quiet for a few seconds; only the cameras were still perpetually flashing.

Sensing his other teammates' curious gazes, as well as the tears hidden within Ding-*ge*'s smile, Lu Boyuan evenly reminded the reporter, "That's all."

The reporter: "Ah… alright… thank you."

The camera panned to the right—

TTC's mid laner appeared on the screen with a head of short blue hair.

The reporter: "…"

Jian Rong: "……"

The spectators watching the stream, who kept feeling as if something was off: "……???"

Ding-*ge* forced a grin on his face. "I hope that everyone can ask more questions related to the competition."

The reporters nodded, indicating their understanding, and asked several relatively conventional questions.

At the end, a reporter asked, "You and your teammates are about to compete at MSI on behalf of the LPL this year. This is also your first time participating in a large-scale international tournament, do you feel nervous?"

Jian Rong: "No."

"Are there any teams or pro players that you're somewhat afraid of? Such as HT's Master, who's currently considered the world's best mid laner…"

"No. Though I don't know who determines the title of 'world's best mid laner'…" Jian Rong interrupted her and looked calmly and coolly into the camera. "That person will be changing their opinion very soon."

The post-match process was complicated. Half an hour after the match finished, TTC was finally able to get in the car to go back to the hotel.

Despite playing a four-game match and also waking up relatively early that day, nobody felt tired after winning the championship. They were so exhilarated that they could've turned the car right back around and returned to the stadium for another BO5 match.

The celebratory dinner was taking place at a private dining room in a certain big hotel. Fu-*ge* had made the reservation the day of the semifinals. The way he put it at the time was: if they won today, then it would be a celebration for winning the championship; if they lost, it would be a celebration for getting second place.

Everyone went back to the hotel and showered before they set out for the restaurant.

In order to avoid food comas, most of them hadn't really eaten anything all day, apart from Jian Rong, who had a history of low blood sugar and had eaten a few pieces of bread. As a result, the moment the food arrived, everyone furiously dug into the spice-laden dishes and alcohol.

"Tell me what the heck is going on here…" Yuan Qian raised his phone, his face bright red from the chili peppers. "Number one on the hot search is 'TTC won,' number two is 'Soft Road hugging,' number eight is 'Bye Pine hugging,' and number nine is 'Yuan Qian hugging nobody'… what the hell…"

Xiao Bai instantly honed in on the important part. "Why are Pine and I ranked below my *ge* and Jian Rong?!"

Lu Boyuan looked at Ding-*ge*. "Is our team on an annual plan with the Weibo hot search?"

Ding-*ge* thought, *Even if laozi really did spend money on the hot search, it wouldn't be to make four of my team members freaking trend for selling rot.*

“This just shows how popular the LPL is right now.” Ding-*ge* drank some *baijiu*, already a bit tipsy. “So you guys look, look at my crow’s feet… have a conscience, stop causing trouble for me all the time.”

With the temporary lifting of the alcohol ban and the great atmosphere that night, even Jian Rong couldn’t resist having a few drinks.

Lu Boyuan was about to tell him not to drink too much, but Xiao Bai spoke before he could. “You should stop drinking, don’t you know what kind of state you were in last time? You’re the spring champion today, how embarrassing would it be if you’re carried out looking as crazy as you did that other time.”

Being reverse suicidally persuaded to drink—Lu Boyuan could say he had witnessed it firsthand now.

After it was all over, though Jian Rong wasn’t drunk, he wasn’t far from it. He swayed on his feet as he walked, squinting and unable to see clearly. However, Xiao Bai was a little worse off. He was currently acting the same way he had the moment they won the championship; the entire way back from the restaurant to the hotel, he had his arms hooked around Pine’s neck, refusing to let go.

That was already bad enough, but he also kept rambling on top of that. “I’ve been drinking beer and training since I was fifteen, my alcohol tolerance is top-notch… who am I afraid of! Who was it last time! That drank two glasses of *baijiu* and escaped to pee! If you’re so great, why don’t you down another two glasses…”

Jian Rong slumped against Lu Boyuan, and his eyes narrowed. “Come on then.”

After that, Xiao Bai really did follow them all the way back to their hotel room.

Because he was drunk, he wasn’t thinking straight, and his movements were exaggerated. Afraid of hurting Xiao Bai, Pine had no choice but to follow and support him.

Both of the bedroom doors were wide open. Xiao Bai subconsciously headed towards the relatively cleaner room, and it was only once he laid down on the bed that he realized something wasn’t right. He shouted loudly, “This room… *burp*, who’s staying in here? Why aren’t there any suitcases or clothes… and the bed’s untouched too…”

Lu Boyuan ignored him. With one arm wrapped around Jian Rong’s waist, he said to Pine, who had followed them into the suite, “Take him back after he falls asleep.”

Pine glanced at the two suitcases lying on the floor of the opposite bedroom for a few seconds before he averted his gaze. “Mn, he falls asleep fast when he’s drunk. I’ll wait here for him.”

Jian Rong was lacking sleep in the first place. After the alcohol hit, he got a splitting headache, and he instantly closed his eyes after Lu Boyuan set him down on the bed.

Lu Boyuan took off Jian Rong’s shoes and socks for him before he turned and went into the bathroom to get a damp towel.

Jian Rong looked very peaceful sleeping. Lu Boyuan leaned down and reached up to brush back Jian Rong's bangs so that he could wipe his face with the towel. Since Jian Rong's skin reddened easily, Lu Boyuan couldn't bear to rub it too forcefully.

When the towel reached his chin, Jian Rong suddenly opened his eyes.

The depths of Jian Rong's eyes were extremely bright, and it seemed like he was a bit dizzy from the alcohol. He had to stare at Lu Boyuan for a few seconds before he finally recognized who the person in front of him was.

There was a somewhat dazed look in Jian Rong's eyes. Lu Boyuan held his gaze for a while, amused, before he tapped Jian Rong's chin with his fingers. "Lift your head, let me wipe your neck…"

Before he could finish his sentence, Jian Rong abruptly hooked his arm around Lu Boyuan's neck and tugged him down a little forcefully.

Lu Boyuan was only caught off guard for a moment. Then, he complied and lowered his head.

Lu Boyuan bent over, one hand braced next to Jian Rong's pillow, as they kissed quietly and passionately.

At first, it was Jian Rong taking the initiative, but he felt somewhat lightheaded. After he dragged Lu Boyuan down and secured the kiss, he grew significantly more sluggish, so he shut his eyes and allowed Lu Boyuan to take charge.

Jian Rong's ears flushed red from the kiss as Lu Boyuan tossed the towel onto the carpet and used his free hand to lightly caress the side of Jian Rong's neck. He pressed his thumb against Jian Rong's Adam's apple and occasionally kneaded it gently, hinting for him to adjust his breathing.

Without warning, a creak came from behind them as someone opened the door from outside.

Lu Boyuan didn't immediately back away.

Approximately two seconds passed before he leisurely straightened up and wiped Jian Rong's mouth for him, since his eyes were already closed. After that, Lu Boyuan turned his head in the direction of the door.

Xiao Bai, drunk and raring for another 300-round battle with Jian Rong, stood there dumbstruck. His mouth hung open for quite a while without a single peep coming out. He latched tightly onto Pine, his supporting structure, and first looked at Lu Boyuan before looking at Jian Rong, who was just kissed to sleep.

Even if he had consumed five liters of *baijiu*, he would be scared sober after seeing this scene.

The alcohol bolstered his courage. Xiao Bai was stupefied for a very long time before he stammered clumsily, "*Ge*... you... him... you two... were you and Jian Rong kissing?"

Lu Boyuan said, "Mn."

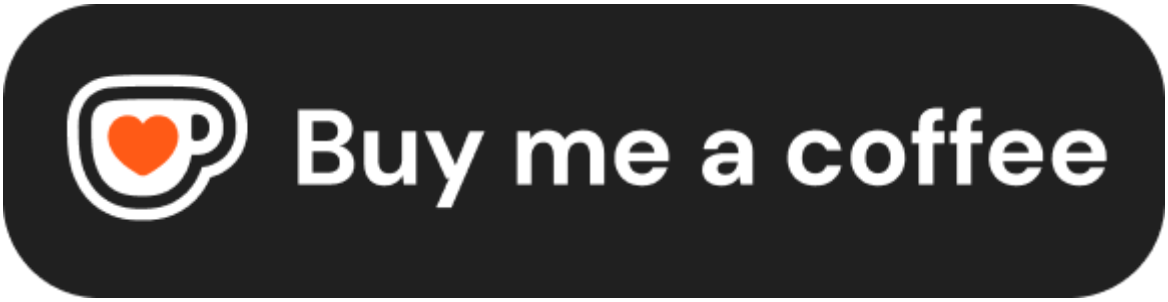
Xiao Bai: "……"

—

The author has something to say:

When writing a novel like this one that resembles workplace romance, I really like it when they're almost caught in various ways.

However, Zhuang Yibai most likely won't dare to do it anymore after this.



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ICDI Chapter 115: Eating vinegar.

Minor NSFW warning for this chapter again! Also a late thanks to Kitty for the Ko-fi~

The flight Ding-*ge* booked back to Shanghai was at eleven in the morning, so everyone was woken up by Ding-*ge*'s phone call the next day at nine.

Jian Rong felt as if weights were attached to his eyes, and he kept them closed even while he was brushing his teeth.

After he finished brushing, he dozed off for a few more minutes upright. He only bent over and rinsed his mouth once he couldn't stand the burn of the toothpaste anymore.

The moment he lifted his head, he saw Lu Boyuan leaning next to the wall nearby, looking at him with an amused expression on his face.

Jian Rong gripped his toothbrush, which he had just cleaned. "I'll be ready in a second."

"Mn, I'll go pack our suitcases."

After Lu Boyuan said that, he shifted closer and leaned down to give Jian Rong a kiss.

Although they would usually also exchange secret kisses back at the base, this was still his first time receiving one immediately upon waking up. Jian

Rong remained frozen, holding his toothpaste, as part of his grumpiness from being woken up dissipated.

Lu Boyuan seemed to recall something on his way out. He glanced back and said, “Xiao Bai entered our room briefly last night.”

Jian Rong bent down to wash his face and couldn’t care less. “When?”

“When you were hugging my neck.”

“Oh.”

After Lu Boyuan left the bathroom, he didn’t get very far before he heard the muffled sound of a small object dropping onto the floor, followed closely by a pattering of frantic footsteps.

Jian Rong stood in the bathroom doorway, his chin dripping with water. “When I was… hugging your neck… and doing what?”

Lu Boyuan said, “When I was kissing you.”

Jian Rong: “…”

By the time Jian Rong was done washing his face, Lu Boyuan had already finished packing his suitcase for him. Since they had only stayed for two nights, they didn’t bring a lot of stuff, so it was very easy to tidy up.

Ding-*ge* was worried about missing their flight, and he urged them to hurry up numerous times in the group chat, making their phones ring constantly.

Jian Rong stole both suitcases from Lu Boyuan. As he opened the door and started to leave, he couldn't help but turn his head and ask, "Since he drank so much last night… is there a possibility that he got blackout drunk?"

Lu Boyuan held back a smile. "Maybe."

They went downstairs and handed the room keys to an employee to check out. The instant Jian Rong got into the car after Lu Boyuan, he saw Xiao Bai slumped in his seat, looking haggard.

At the noise, Xiao Bai's eyes shot towards them.

Then he proceeded to purse his lips and blink as his gaze continuously wavered between the two of them. As if he had remembered something, he wore a curious and cautious expression. For quite a while, he started to speak but ended up hesitating over and over, and his butt kept shifting restlessly in his seat.

"*Of course I didn't get blackout drunk I've even started to fearfully but eagerly replay my memories from last night in my head*" was written all over his face.

Just as Jian Rong was contemplating whether or not he should help Xiao Bai lose his memories, Lu Boyuan looked back and grabbed onto Jian Rong's wrist before he tugged him to his seat.

The car headed towards the airport. Jian Rong was no longer sleepy, and his eyelids drooped as he stared at the scenery outside the window.

“Once we get to the airport, put on your masks and stuff.” Ding-*ge* broke the silence. “A few interviewers reached out to me, and I couldn’t refuse because they’re all the official type of interview. But I made sure to schedule them next week for you guys, so you can rest well and have some fun for a few days first… of course, don’t overdo it.”

Yuan Qian replied with a ‘*got it*.’

Ding-*ge* glanced behind him. When he spotted Xiao Bai full of energy, he lifted an eyebrow in surprise. “Does your head still hurt?”

Xiao Bai forced himself to play it cool. “No, it’s not like I drank that much last night.”

“Give me a break, you were drunk like a dead pig. And you kept insisting on sleeping in the same room as Jian Rong too.” Ding-*ge* said, “Only Pine looks after you.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

There was clearly a headrest separating them, but he could still sense a sinister gaze radiating from behind him.

Whenever Xiao Bai thought about the scene he had witnessed last night, he felt very stunned. Even though their work environment was full of guys, this really was his first time encountering something like this. To top it off, the couple consisted of his own teammates…

Strangely enough, despite the huge shock he had received, he didn’t feel disgusted in the slightest. Instead, he had a sort of “*no wonder*” enlightened

feeling.

Someone extended a bottle of yogurt in front of him, from the brand that he typically preferred drinking the most.

Xiao Bai turned his head. “Where’d you get that?”

Pine didn’t look at him. He only said, “I bought it from a convenience store before we got in the car.”

Xiao Bai stared at Pine’s jawline for a few seconds. Restraining the urge to ask him what he thought about this discovery, he lowered his head and bit down on the straw to take a sip of the yogurt.

Pine: “Take it.”

“No.” Xiao Bai swallowed the yogurt. “I ate a little too much at breakfast, so I’m only gonna drink one mouthful. You can have the rest.”

Ding-*ge* suddenly recalled something, and he twisted his head around again. “Even though this question is a bit unnecessary… Xiao Lu, are you still not going to stream tomorrow for your birthday?”

Originally, Jian Rong had his chin propped up on his hand as he stared at the city outside. Upon hearing that, he raised his head and looked over, startled.

Lu Boyuan was currently leaning back in his chair, catching up on sleep, and he didn’t bother opening his eyes. “I’m not.”

Ding-*ge* murmured an “*okay*.”

The second Ding-*ge* faced forward again, there was a tug on Lu Boyuan's shirt.

After Jian Rong repeatedly confirmed tomorrow's date, he said blankly, "Tomorrow's April 29."

Lu Boyuan: "Mn?"

Jian Rong was bewildered. "Isn't your birthday… May 8?"

Lu Boyuan lifted his eyebrow. "Where'd you get that from."

"Baidu."

Lu Boyuan nodded and said, "It's wrong."

"…"

Lu Boyuan never streamed for his birthday. In the past, Jian Rong never really paid much attention to things like birthday merch events either, so if he wanted to know the date of Lu Boyuan's birthday, the only way he could think of to find it was by searching online.

He hadn't expected it to be wrong.

Jian Rong's plans were completely ruined. Despite being utterly calm last night during an interview viewed by over a hundred million people, at that moment, he looked somewhat helpless.

Seeing Jian Rong's expression, Lu Boyuan reached out and patted his head. He hid a smile as he comforted, "I don't celebrate this kind of thing."

It was true that Lu Boyuan didn't celebrate it, but Ding-*ge* would still buy a cake for him every year. On the birthdays when they didn't have any practice matches, Lu Boyuan would also invite everyone out for a meal.

But Jian Rong wasn't consoled. Once he found out that Lu Boyuan's birthday was the next day, he buried his head and remained glued to his phone, which vibrated constantly with WeChat messages. It was only when they got on the plane and the announcement told the passengers to turn off their phones that Jian Rong finally switched his phone to airplane mode and slid it into his pocket.

Nobody had rested well the night before, so they napped on the plane and continued to sleep after returning to the base.

Lu Boyuan wasn't particularly tired. He unpacked his suitcase and changed into some casualwear before he went to knock on his boyfriend's door.

When nobody responded after two knocks, Lu Boyuan thought that Jian Rong had gone to sleep.

"Xiao Rong went out," the auntie informed him when she spotted this scene on her way to the balcony to dry clothes.

Lu Boyuan raised a brow. "When?"

"He left as soon as you guys came back. I told him to change out of his clothes so I could wash it for him, but he refused." The auntie chuckled. "He said he had plans with a friend and was in a rush."

Lu Boyuan nodded. "Okay, I see."

After finishing such a big competition and with so few days off, nobody was willing to touch a computer again.

Lu Boyuan sent Jian Rong a text before he dug out their Switch, which was almost covered in dust at this point, from a drawer in the living room. He connected it to the TV and started playing a single-player game.

Lu Boyuan only received a response once all their other teammates were awake and sitting on the couch in high spirits, playing on their phones or chatting with each other.

[R: Where'd you go?]

[R-ong: Meeting up with a friend.]

[R-ong: My phone died earlier…]

"Captain… Captain?"

Right as Lu Boyuan was typing his reply, he was interrupted by Yuan Qian. He lifted his head. "Mn."

"We're going out to have fun tonight, dinner and then a bar. Do you wanna come?" Yuan Qian said with a grin, "My girlfriend's coming, along with a few of her friends, and I also invited Da Niu and the rest… you could bring your partner along too?"

When he said that, Xiao Bai froze briefly in the middle of playing his mobile game.

His partner… his partner had been here this whole freaking time.

Yuan Qian continued, “Oh right, should we ask Jian Rong if he wants to come? Is he gonna be too young? Speaking of which, how come he isn’t back yet.”

Xiao Bai: “Eighteen is still too young? *Ge*, were you already eighteen when you first went to a bar?”

Yuan Qian said truthfully, “No. Then let me give him a call and ask…”

Pine interjected, “No need for that.”

He held up his phone and shook it. On the screen was a Weibo post that had just popped up in his feed. “He’s in Ningbo.”

Lu Boyuan answered Jian Rong with an “*okay*” before he went to search for the Weibo post Pine was talking about.

[StarTV Shiliu: Soft is badass [too happy] [group photo] thank you champion for treating me to dessert.]

The location of the Weibo post was unexpectedly Ningbo.

In the photo, the person Lu Boyuan had waited the entire afternoon for was sitting right across from Shiliu. He was even still wearing their team uniform and Lu Boyuan’s merch hat. Various desserts were displayed on the table like glittering jewels; there were hearts and stars on one of the cakes, and everything looked very sweet.

There were over two hundred comments underneath the Weibo post. Shiliu had replied to the first few.

[I miss the days when you two used to duo Q together. Back then, I felt so happy every day watching your streams.]

[StarTV Shiliu replied: I also miss it a lot, haha]

[When will we be able to see you two game together!!]

[StarTV Shiliu replied: I just asked Xiao Rong, he said that we'll do it as soon as he's free once he's back!]

[And here I thought that Soft wouldn't contact you anymore after going pro.]

[StarTV Shiliu replied: Impossible! We chat regularly with each other, don't make up rumors.]

…

"Right after coming back from the finals, he went straight to Ningbo without sleeping or changing out of his team uniform?!" Yuan Qian was amazed. He joked, "They must have a pretty tight relationship then."

Xiao Bai's heart skipped a beat, and he quickly shot a look at his *ge*. "Eh, it's so-so, aren't they just ordinary friends."

Yuan Qian shook his head. "There's definitely more to it than that. When I got back to the base, I was so tired that I didn't even have the energy to respond to my wife's texts, and I fell asleep right away."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Lu Boyuan put down his phone before he leaned back against the sofa and picked up the controllers to continue playing his game.

Xiao Bai watched as his *ge* calmly slammed the boss against the ground and ruthlessly pummeled it. He silently shifted a bit closer to Pine.

Yuan Qian: “Then Captain…”

“I won’t be going.” Lu Boyuan said mildly, “You guys have fun.”

Everyone else departed; only Lu Boyuan was left in the base.

Lu Boyuan finished two more missions before he got bored and turned off the TV. There were many notifications on his phone, all from news articles regarding their team, and Lu Boyuan scrolled through them casually on his way back to his room. After he got back, he directly locked his phone screen and tossed it onto his bed.

He took out his tablet from a drawer and continued watching the livestream replays that he didn’t get to finish before.

What Shiliu said was correct: he had indeed helped Jian Rong out a lot during his initial streaming days. Clips of Jian Rong duo queuing with Shiliu appeared every so often among Jian Rong’s livestream replays, and Shiliu had also advertised for Jian Rong in his own stream. Jian Rong’s personality was a bit more reserved back then compared to now, and he would rub his nose before thanking Shiliu.

Lu Boyuan watched the videos silently. Whenever he occasionally heard them scream with excitement from wiping the opposing team, his eyebrows

would furrow ever so slightly before swiftly returning to normal.

It was only once a low battery warning popped up on the tablet that Lu Boyuan pulled himself out of those videos. He glanced up and saw that it was already almost midnight.

At some unknown point in time, his phone had been put on silent mode, and the screen was filled with messages. Lu Boyuan checked them all, but none were from Jian Rong.

He let out a heavy exhale before he plugged the tablet in to charge.

Then, he heard someone knock on his door.

It was very light, and there were only two raps, as if the person knocking was afraid that Lu Boyuan was asleep. Silence ensued after, but judging from the shadow underneath the door, they hadn't left yet.

Recalling the video Xiao Bai had sent in the group chat of him disco dancing just a few minutes ago, Lu Boyuan threw aside his phone and got off the bed to open the door.

Jian Rong stood outside, still wearing his team uniform. He was holding his hat in his hand, and since his hair had been flattened almost the entire day, it was as messy as if he had gotten into a fight with Zhuang Yibai.

Upon seeing Lu Boyuan, Jian Rong's eyes lit up.

"I thought you might've gone to sleep."

“Almost.” Lu Boyuan glanced at his hair. “How’d you get back? Weren’t there no seats available for the high-speed rail?”

“I took a taxi. I couldn’t get a seat on the bullet train on my way there either, a lot of people are off for the Labor Day holiday…” Jian Rong paused. “How’d you know I went out of town?”

A few seconds later, he added, “…how’d you know the high-speed rail was fully booked?”

Because at first, Lu Boyuan was planning to go find him in Ningbo, but then he had discovered that there weren’t even any second class seats available thanks to the Labor Day holiday.

“I saw Shiliu’s Weibo post.” Lu Boyuan only answered one of the questions. “What’d you go to Ningbo for?”

Jian Rong abruptly remembered something important. He checked his phone; it was a few minutes past midnight.

Jian Rong handed Lu Boyuan the bag in his hand.

Lu Boyuan had been too preoccupied staring at his hair, so he only realized now that Jian Rong was also holding a few other things.

A certain luxury brand logo was printed on the bag. Lu Boyuan took it and said, “…in order to buy this?”

“Sort of. Shiliu was traveling abroad recently, so I asked him to buy it for me.” Jian Rong explained, “I was originally thinking that he could bring it to

Shanghai and give it to me when he visits in a few days… but I got the date wrong."

That was why he had immediately left as soon as he got back to the base. Since he couldn't get a bullet train ticket, he had no choice but to take a taxi both ways. After arriving in Ningbo, he had also hurriedly treated Shiliu to afternoon tea to express his gratitude.

Lu Boyuan's Adam's apple bobbed. "Why didn't you tell me, I could've driven you over."

Jian Rong laughed. "Aren't you supposed to keep it a secret when you're giving someone a gift?"

Lu Boyuan gave a low "*en*." "How long did it take to drive there?"

"A little more than three hours." Jian Rong said, "The driver said that it doesn't usually take that long, but because of the Labor Day holiday, there were a lot of cars on the highway."

Yesterday, Jian Rong had just finished playing in a four-game match under high pressure, and he had also gotten into a spiteful drinking competition with Xiao Bai. Today, he was so sleepy that he couldn't even open his eyes when he was brushing his teeth, but he had still traveled for a round trip of nearly seven hours to go get Lu Boyuan his gift…

Lu Boyuan drew in a deep breath, almost imperceptibly, and looked unwaveringly at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong let out a sigh of relief and felt much more relaxed, since he hadn't missed his boyfriend's birthday.

He leaned against the door frame and said, "Open it and see if you like it or not, I've… never really given anyone a gift before."

Lu Boyuan asked, "You haven't given anything to Shiliu before?"

Jian Rong didn't know why he was suddenly bringing up Shiliu, and he was caught off guard. "I have, but they were stream gifts… does that count?"

Though Lu Boyuan was aware that he was being quite petty, the corners of his mouth still curled up.

He smiled and didn't open the bag. "What if I say I don't like it."

Jian Rong's face instantly fell into a scowl, transforming his eyes into monolids. "Then return it to me…"

Lu Boyuan chuckled as he lowered his head and leaned towards him. Jian Rong's words disappeared between their lips.

Jian Rong's first reaction was that they were outside his room, and he placed a hand on Lu Boyuan's shoulder before he suddenly remembered that everyone else was at the bar.

At that moment, they were the only ones in the base.

Lu Boyuan bit down on his lower lip, not too harshly or gently, causing Jian Rong's fingers to tremble. The hand he had pressed against Lu Boyuan's

chest abruptly moved upwards, and he hooked his arm around Lu Boyuan's neck.

When he woke up yesterday morning, he had scolded himself for being a disappointment—he had finally managed to get some alone time with Lu Boyuan, and they didn't even have any matches to worry about, so how the hell did he end up just falling asleep.

Then he made a trip to Ningbo, wasting another day. Jian Rong had regretted it the entire drive over, and he wanted to chat with Lu Boyuan to alleviate his agitation, but his phone had coincidentally run out of battery.

A day's worth of irritation finally settled down now.

Lu Boyuan wasn't very happy that entire day either, so his kisses were a little fierce. Jian Rong was moved from the doorway to the wall inside the room, and they temporarily dropped the things they were holding onto the ground. Lu Boyuan's hand slipped underneath his shirt, causing Jian Rong's waist to go weak as he subconsciously grabbed onto Lu Boyuan's arm.

After his lips were released, Jian Rong leaned against the wall, panting slightly.

Lu Boyuan was originally intending to sleep for a while, so only a dim bedside lamp was turned on. Jian Rong's eyes were the brightest things in the entire room.

Lu Boyuan reached up to stroke Jian Rong's hair before he said, "How come you don't taste like cake."

Jian Rong frowned, confused. “What?”

“Didn’t you go eat dessert?”

“I didn’t eat anything.” Jian Rong was a little giddy from all the kissing, and he said quietly, “Shiliu didn’t either. He ended up taking it to go for his girlfriend.”

Lu Boyuan let out an “*en*” before he kissed the mole on the tip of Jian Rong’s nose.

Jian Rong unexpectedly heard a bit of satisfaction in his “*en*.”

With the mention of this topic, Jian Rong recalled that he had been running around outside the entire day. “I’m gonna go take a shower first.”

“Okay.” Now that Jian Rong was at Lu Boyuan’s side, that hint of restlessness and unease from before vanished, and his voice sounded a little lazy. “Shower in my room?”

Jian Rong’s heartbeat accelerated significantly with that question.

“I’ll find some of my clothes for you to wear.” Lu Boyuan said, “It’ll be very large, and more comfortable than your pajamas.”

…

Jian Rong barely felt conflicted inside at all.

Holding Lu Boyuan’s clothes, he had just pushed open the bathroom door when he heard Lu Boyuan ask him, very naturally, “Can we go together?”

Even though it was about to be summer, the water in the shower was still somewhat hot.

They kissed in the shower cubicle; the ceramic tile in the bathroom was colder than the wall in Lu Boyuan's bedroom. Jian Rong's head felt feverish, but his back was chilly, stimulating him to the point that he couldn't really remember how to kiss back.

Lu Boyuan didn't force him to continue with the kisses. Pressed against Jian Rong, he sunk his fingers into Jian Rong's hair and lowly asked him if he wanted to wash this part too.

…

At the beginning, Jian Rong thought that it was just going to be the same as before.

It was only when Lu Boyuan dragged him onto the bed to kiss him after they came out of the bathroom that he realized… it seemed to be a little different.

They were reacting more intensely than they had any other time, and the sound of their breathing intertwined ambiguously in the room.

Jian Rong's mind was already empty, his world narrowed down to Lu Boyuan. Amidst the faint glow of the lamp, he could distinctly feel Lu Boyuan's breaths, body temperature, and hands.

Lu Boyuan stopped, propping himself up on two hands next to the pillow, and looked at Jian Rong.

His shoulders were very broad, and there were light bite marks left by Jian Rong on his lips. His dark and heavy gaze pierced downwards, filled with possessiveness.

“Jian Rong.” Lu Boyuan’s voice was low and husky. “If you don’t put your legs down right now, then you can just leave them there the entire night.”

Lu Boyuan had trapped him too far in the corner. In order to make space for Lu Boyuan, Jian Rong had unconsciously wrapped his right leg around Lu Boyuan’s waist.

Jian Rong didn’t move.

Even though he had never specifically attempted to research this sort of thing… he had encountered many types of people online before. For the sake of popularity, some streamers liked to shamelessly tease the water friends, and there were also a lot of drawings and fanfiction related to this in the supertopic. So, more or less, he understood what Lu Boyuan was implying when he said that.

Jian Rong stared at him quietly for a while before he tilted his head to the side and nipped Lu Boyuan’s Adam’s apple. With a flushed face, he put on a calm expression. “I’m young and my legs are strong, so they won’t get sore even if I leave them there.”

Lu Boyuan, who was five years older than him, lifted an eyebrow and went silent for a few seconds. Then, he immediately pinched Jian Rong’s chin and blocked his mouth again.

Jian Rong had always considered himself to be a relatively unbothered person. Hardly anything ever affected him.

On top of that, he himself wanted to become more and more intimate with Lu Boyuan, until they were as close as they could possibly be—

But only a few minutes later.

He slumped on the bed with his entire face buried in the pillow, his mind full of—

Damn…

This is the freaking world champion's fin… gers…

Maybe I can't do this.

Jian Rong was truly unable to endure Lu Boyuan doing this, and he couldn't help but let out a fleeting whimper. Feeling embarrassed, he restrained himself for a few more seconds. In the end, he couldn't hold back any longer and said into the pillow, "Hold on… just do it already."

"Endure it a little," Lu Boyuan said softly, "or else it'll hurt."

Jian Rong's whole body was red. "…I'm not afraid of pain…… I'm really… not freaking afraid…"

After an indeterminate amount of time, Jian Rong finally let out a sigh of relief. He gripped the pillow, feeling weak from head to toe, unable to move. But when he heard the sound of a package being torn open, he slowly turned his head.

It took Jian Rong a few seconds to recognize the object in Lu Boyuan's hand. He said, shocked, "When… did you buy that?"

"Not too long ago." Lu Boyuan smiled. "I bought it just to have it, I didn't think about when to use it."

Jian Rong: "Do you think I believe that?"

Lu Boyuan's smile deepened before he grabbed Jian Rong's legs and effortlessly hauled him over.

Jian Rong felt like it was really a huge disadvantage being skinny.

What kind of man was he if he could easily and casually be picked up by someone else??

In the middle, Lu Boyuan had turned on the air conditioning, but they were both still sweating a little.

They didn't do it for very long before Jian Rong lost all his strength.

Lu Boyuan was evidently still full of energy. Jian Rong laid on the bed, his legs sprawled carelessly to the side. When they were bent, it was possible to see his knees trembling ever so slightly.

Out of the reddened corner of Jian Rong's eye, he saw Lu Boyuan bend over and pick up the box containing his gift from below the bed.

Lu Boyuan had opened the box earlier when he was getting clothes for Jian Rong; there was a belt inside.

Lu Boyuan asked, “How much was it?”

Jian Rong’s voice was hoarse. “…tens of thousands.”

“So generous.”

“I wanted to buy something even more expensive.” Jian Rong swallowed. “But we weren’t done with the tournament yet, so I didn’t have the prize money, and my savings from before were put into a fixed term account… I ran out of money.”

Lu Boyuan laughed.

He took out the belt and half-knelt on the bed. “Give me another gift?”

“What?”

“Try on the belt for me.”

Jian Rong furrowed his brows and didn’t understand why this could be considered a gift. He said, “Then wait until I’m wearing clothes…”

Before he could finish, Lu Boyuan lifted up one of his hands and wrapped the belt around his arm, buckling it in. The black belt stood in stark contrast to Jian Rong’s fair skin.

Jian Rong’s head went blank for a moment, and he started breathing even harder.

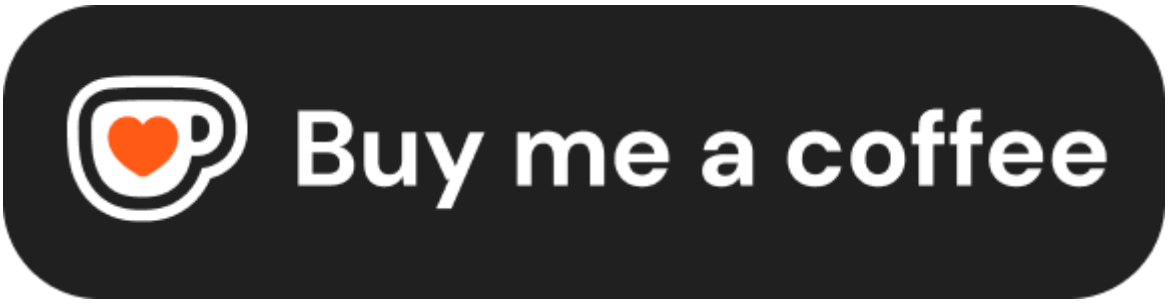
Lu Boyuan placed his arm back down on the bed before he laced his own fingers through Jian Rong’s and tightened them.

He said, “I was originally going to tie both hands together.”

Jian Rong did his best to calm his heart rate. He licked his lips. “…what’s up with you?”

“Don’t know.” Lu Boyuan lowered his head and kissed him before he said raspily, “I seem to be a little jealous.”

Jian Rong was startled, but before he could react, Lu Boyuan grabbed onto his legs again and dragged him once more back into the chaotic waves.



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ICDI Chapter 116: I, Zhuang Yibai, have never been so speechless in my twenty-plus years of life.

Some time late at night, Lu Boyuan heard the sound of their teammates' voices outside his room.

Actually, the base was fairly soundproof, but that was no use when everyone else in the team except Pine all had loud voices, especially when they were drunk.

Lu Boyuan distinctly felt the person underneath him stiffen for a moment, as his legs also forcefully tightened around him.

As a result, Lu Boyuan stopped moving, and he merely lowered his head to kiss Jian Rong.

They had been kissing almost the entire time. They kissed when they met each other's eyes, when they were feeling good, and occasionally, when Jian Rong made a noise and wanted to cover his face, Lu Boyuan would also smile and kiss him.

It quieted down outside. Jian Rong's bangs were damp with sweat, and his entire body heaved for air.

All along, Jian Rong had been under the impression that even though he wasn't as muscular as some other people, he had a lot of strength, so he could still tentatively be considered a little hunk. He had helped carry some things before for the young woman he used to live next to, and he had been able to directly lift up a big sack with just one hand.

But now, even shifting his legs felt monumentally difficult.

Lu Boyuan could tell that Jian Rong was tired, and he rubbed the outer corner of his eye with his thumb. “I’ll take you to shower, and then you can sleep.”

Jian Rong tilted his head back. He swallowed a few times before he shook his head. “…we’ll go after you’re done.”

There was no point in doing this kind of thing with the person he liked if only one of them was feeling good.

In the first place, Jian Rong wasn’t someone who was particularly fragile, and he looked at Lu Boyuan. Even at a time like this, he didn’t forget to show off. “Are you tired? If you are, I can do it myself… mn.”

When Jian Rong remembered that the others had returned, the noise that he had accidentally let escape was enough to send him straight into self-seclusion.

After they were finished, Lu Boyuan still ended up carrying Jian Rong to the bathroom.

Once Jian Rong was clean and back on the bed, he immediately closed his eyes and fell asleep. Lu Boyuan covered him with the blanket and pressed a kiss to his shoulder.

Lu Boyuan was full of energy and wasn’t sleepy in the slightest. He even felt the desire to smoke, but he was also afraid of disturbing the rest of the person next to him.

So he opened WeChat and randomly found someone to send a text to.

[R: Want to smoke.]

Revelry and happiness belonged to the strong. The weak were still stuck weeping and reviewing the finals match that they weren't able to participate in.

That was why Lu Boyuan swiftly received a reply, despite the fact that it was currently 3:30 AM.

[XIU: ?]

[XIU: What to do? Though you stepped on my broken dead body to win the championship, I'm the type to forgive and forget – shall I send a box over to the young master via same day delivery service?]

[R: I already have some.]

[XIU: ?]

[XIU: You're really something. The entire internet is exploding because of your post-match interview, yet you disappear for the whole day only to show up at 3:30 in the middle of the night, as if you're bored as hell, to chat with me about smoking.]

In his sleep, Jian Rong flipped over and scooted closer. He pressed his forehead against Lu Boyuan's leg and lazily threw one of his arms over him.

Lu Boyuan resisted the urge to wake him up and pulled out a cigarette from the drawer to bite down on. He kneaded and toyed with Jian Rong's hand

as he opened Weibo, which he hadn't looked at in quite some time.

It was true that Weibo had been very lively these past two days. Since XIU hadn't played in the finals, PUD's fans used that to argue that TTC's win didn't mean much, after which TTC's fans retorted back. Both sides had been clashing for many years now, and there were actually relatively fewer arguments this year, perhaps because of Jian Rong's declaration to fight HT.

Most of the discussion was still centered around what Lu Boyuan had said in the post-match interview.

Consequently, all the female pro players, female hosts, and female streamers in the esports circle had been unearthed. The fans and those here to watch the show had combed and filtered through each person with short, dyed hair one by one. Some women couldn't stand the disturbance and specially made statements expressing that they weren't the person in question; there were also some women who posted a few photos of themselves with short, dyed hair and made ambiguous Weibo posts to freeload off the popularity.

Due to the number of likes and comments on it, the post at the top of the hot search topic was a picture of him and Jian Rong sitting next to each other during the post-match interview.

[When Will TTC's Mid Laner And Jungler Battle In Bed: Short, dyed hair.]

There were all sorts of comments below the post. The two words that showed up the most often were still "*well matched*," and one comment said:

"*You're overthinking things, how could Road be so obvious about it, isn't this basically the same as making it public?*"

In fact, there was a split second where Lu Boyuan had thought about making it public.

The reason he hadn't done so earlier was because he didn't want Jian Rong to be flamed for it. Lu Boyuan could easily imagine what those antis would say—undoubtedly, they would go after Jian Rong for dating before he even achieved anything.

But now, Jian Rong had become the champion right after joining the LPL, he had gotten MVP more times than he could count on one hand, and there was that 1v5 from the playoffs… needless to say, the most impressive pro player this year was Lu Boyuan's boyfriend.

If they truly did go public, perhaps some people would even say that he had led the kid astray and was into coercing new teammates.

Jian Rong's fingers suddenly twitched and hooked onto Lu Boyuan's index finger.

Eyes shut, Jian Rong murmured hoarsely, "…go to bed."

Lu Boyuan couldn't tell if he was awake or sleep talking. He tossed his phone onto the nightstand, and all the thoughts emptied out from his head as he pulled Jian Rong into his arms and fell asleep.

Jian Rong was woken up by the sound of a phone ringing the next day.

The ringtone continued for quite a while before he finally moved. He followed the source of the noise, found the phone, and answered it without bothering to open his eyes.

Filled with grumpiness, he asked in a very irritated tone of voice, “Who is this?”

The other end went briefly quiet. Then, they said uncertainly, “Are you Xiao Rong?”

“I’m your…”

Jian Rong swallowed the word “*dad*” back down.

Because he noticed that the phone he was holding wasn’t the right size. His own phone was a model from a few years ago, one that he could completely wrap his hand around. This phone obviously felt somewhat larger to hold.

The woman on the other end laughed and said gently, “I’m Boyuan’s mom. Are you with Boyuan?”

Jian Rong: “…”

If Jian Rong’s mobility wasn’t limited right now, he could’ve jumped straight onto the ceiling.

Lu Boyuan wasn’t in bed. Jian Rong got up and checked that he wasn’t in the bathroom either.

“He’s…” Jian Rong was startled by his own voice, and a few seconds passed before he said, “Probably downstairs. He forgot his phone in my room.”

“I see, no worries.” Mama Lu laughed. “I’m currently outside of your team’s base. If it’s convenient for you, do you mind coming down and opening the door for Auntie?”

Jian Rong’s mind was in chaos.

He hung up and instantly got out of bed to open the door. After he checked that nobody was in the hallway, he tiptoed back to his own room in a rush and randomly found some clean clothes to slip on.

The entire base was empty. The others were still sleeping, whereas Lu Boyuan was out somewhere.

Jian Rong had no choice but to put on a brave face and get the door.

Mama Lu was dressed appropriately and tastefully, and she carried a brand name purse along with a few insulated food thermoses. She smiled very sweetly when she saw him.

Jian Rong felt a little guilty, and he looked down at the objects she was holding. “Let me get those for you, Auntie.”

“Okay, thank you.” Mama Lu beamed and said, “Is Boyuan not here? Or did he tell you to come and open the door?”

Jian Rong took the thermoses from her; they were quite heavy. “He’s not here, he probably went out.”

Mama Lu nodded and followed him inside. “I asked the auntie to make some nourishing soup early this morning. You all have been working hard lately, make sure to drink a lot later.”

Jian Rong put the thermoses in the kitchen before he poured Mama Lu a glass of water.

He already wasn’t very good at communicating with older folk, and that was even more so the case right now.

Mama Lu accepted the glass and thanked him. “Did I disrupt your sleep? Boyuan really is something else, how could he just leave his phone in his teammate’s room.”

Jian Rong shook his head. “No, I was awake.”

Mama Lu looked at his disheveled hair and the exhaustion written across his face. She laughed but didn’t expose his lie.

“The team didn’t arrange any celebratory events for you all, since you just won the championship?”

If any random stream water friend or teammate saw Jian Rong at that moment, they would be shocked by his ‘*primary school student answering questions in class*’ appearance.

He said, “They did. We had a celebratory dinner two days ago, and we went out for some fun yesterday night too.”

Mama Lu nodded. Although she was usually dignified and composed, she couldn't help but beat around the bush and inquire, "Did Boyuan's girlfriend go with you all as well?"

Jian Rong was caught off guard. "What?"

"Don't worry, he's already told me that he has a partner." Mama Lu smiled. "You must've met her, right?"

"…"

Jian Rong hadn't expected Lu Boyuan to have already brought this matter up with his family, so he was momentarily a bit confused and at a loss.

When did Lu Boyuan tell them? And how?

What should I say?

"Ah, it's fine if you don't want to say anything. I can just ask him later." Mama Lu noticed the conflicted look on his face and quickly said, "Are you hungry? You just woke up, so you must not have eaten anything yet, right? Maybe you should go drink some soup now to pad your stomach first."

Jian Rong snapped out of it. "No need, I…"

With a *beep*, someone pushed open the front door of the base.

Lu Boyuan entered wearing workout clothes, a mask, and a hat. He was soaked in sweat, and he was also holding a small black plastic bag.

Upon seeing his mother, Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. “Mom, why’re you here? You didn’t say anything ahead of time.”

“I did. I sent you a text but you didn’t answer me.” Mama Lu said, “Where did you go? You’re sweating all over.”

Lu Boyuan took off his mask and walked over. “A morning run. I forgot to bring my phone.”

“It’s right here.” Jian Rong stood up and pulled out the phone before he slipped it into Lu Boyuan’s pocket and said, “I’ll be going upstairs first then…”

“Hang on.” Lu Boyuan handed the black plastic bag to him. “Take this up and use it.”

Jian Rong took the bag. “What is it?”

“Ointment.”

Jian Rong pulled out one of the boxes, puzzled, and checked the effect. The moment he read one line on the box, his earlobes flushed red, and he shoved the ointment back into the plastic bag like he was stabbing someone.

Lu Boyuan said, “I took a look in the morning, you probably have to apply a bit…”

Before Lu Boyuan could finish his sentence, he was stomped on.

There really was a lot of force behind that stomp; it was quite painful.

Mama Lu realized something. “Boyuan, Xiao Rong’s name is printed on your hat.”

She smiled and said, “Isn’t that right? When I was watching the match the other day, I think I saw that this was Xiao Rong’s name.”

“Mn, it’s his merch.” Lu Boyuan continued, as if nothing had just happened, “Can you apply it by yourself? If not, you can wait until I get upstairs…”

“I can!” Jian Rong swiftly interrupted him and tied the bag into a tight knot with the hand speed that he had used to get a pro penta kill. “Auntie I’m going now you two keep on chatting.”

After Jian Rong went upstairs, Mama Lu retracted her gaze and said, “Look at you, leaving your phone with Xiao Rong and making me interrupt his sleep.”

“It’s fine, he has a good temper.” Lu Boyuan asked again, “How come you came to visit?”

“I came to give you your present, and the soup. It’s been stewing for a long time, so it’ll be full of nutrients. I brought a lot, tell your teammates to have some too when they wake up, especially Xiao Rong. He’s still thin.”

Lu Boyuan nodded. “He’s gained a little weight now, it’s just hard to tell with clothes on.”

Mama Lu didn’t notice the underlying implication. “In any case, it’s better if boys are a bit more sturdy.

“Also, I’m here because…” She paused. “It’s your birthday today, is that young lady not going to come and accompany you?”

Lu Boyuan opened the gift: it was a watch. He raised a brow. “What young lady?”

Since the question had already been asked, Mama Lu didn’t bother trying to conceal it anymore. “Your new partner, of course.”

“My partner…” Lu Boyuan closed the gift box and didn’t hide anything either. “Mom, who told you that my partner is a woman?”

The instant Jian Rong went upstairs, he ran into Xiao Bai, who was rubbing his eyes and on his way to eat breakfast.

At first, Xiao Bai was startled when he saw him, and his gaze unconsciously traveled slowly downwards, starting from Jian Rong’s head.

Messy hair, dark circles under his eyes, a few ambiguous pink marks spanning from his neck to his collarbones, and his *ge*’s slippers on his feet.

The most damning thing of all—Jian Rong smelled like his *ge*.

It wasn’t that Xiao Bai was sensitive; it was just that the peppermint aroma of his *ge*’s shower gel was truly too recognizable.

“You…” Xiao Bai couldn’t resist seeking death. “Why are you wearing my *ge*’s slippers?”

Jian Rong’s first instinct was to lie, but when he opened his mouth—this bastard clearly saw him and Lu Boyuan kissing already, so why was he still

pretending to be some clueless teammate?

As a result, Jian Rong narrowed his eyes and asked in return, “Why don’t you tell me?”

“…”

“Move it.” Jian Rong said, “You’re blocking my door.”

Stunned, Xiao Bai shifted his little body slightly to the side and stared blankly as Jian Rong walked straight into his *ge*’s room.

A few seconds later, Jian Rong came out holding the clothes that he had left there the previous night. He went straight back to his own room and closed the door.

Xiao Bai: “……”

What the fuck???

As he was still trapped in his astonishment, his phone suddenly started chiming.

In their loving TTC family WeChat group chat, Ding-*ge* raged—

[Ding-*ge*: I told you guys to rest well and stay under the radar, but aren’t you all quite the impressive lot? You even ordered Ace of Spades champagne???]

[Ding-*ge*: Sharing a link: [Shock! The degradation of the LPL? TTC’s top laner, ADC, and support spotted partying wildly at a bar late into the night

after winning! A table covered with Ace of Spades, countless beautiful women nearby—only the mid laner and jungler were obediently resting and practicing back at the base! Click here for details...]]

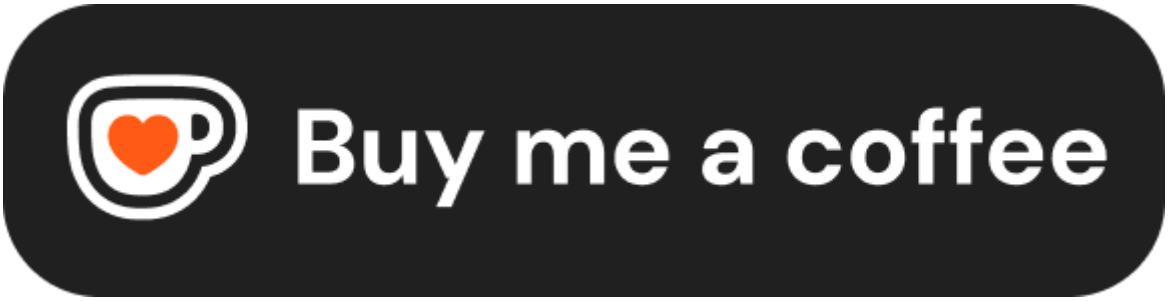
[Ding-*ge*: [TTC's mid laner and jungler suspected to be isolated for being too strong? Not invited to the celebratory party!]]

[Ding-*ge*: [TTC has severe internal conflicts, are TTC's mid laner and jungler about to leave the team?!]]

[P-Baby's Little Support: ……]

[P-Baby's Little Support: This is very hard for me to explain to you.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: All I can say is that I, Zhuang Yibai, have never been so speechless in my twenty-plus years of life.]



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ICDI Chapter 117: .

The auntie was on break today. Ding-*ge* was worried that these champions would be hungover, headache-stricken, and have nothing to eat, so he grumbled and cursed as he ordered takeout from their favorite restaurant and took it back to the base.

He smelled cigarette smoke the moment he entered the base. As a result, he followed the scent all the way over to the balcony and faintly caught sight of half of Lu Boyuan's body.

Ding-*ge* didn't even bother putting down the food. In a practiced motion, he pulled up his QR code for payments and rushed over. "You're flying high now that you just won the championship, huh? You aren't even closing the balcony door anymore to try and hide the fact that you're smoking, isn't that a bit disrespectful to me…"

When Ding-*ge* got closer and saw the woman standing beside Lu Boyuan, he swallowed everything else he was about to say back down into his stomach.

He had always thought of Mama Lu as someone elegant and distinguished, but she was currently leaning against the wall with a cigarette dangling from her lips. Her beautiful eyes were narrowed as she gazed off into the distance, and a few seconds passed before she slowly turned her head. "Is smoking not permitted here? My apologies, he didn't tell me either."

Sensing the serious atmosphere, Ding-*ge* went quiet for a few seconds. Then he put his phone back into his pocket and gripped the door handle considerately. "Of course it's okay. Please, smoke as much as you'd like, I have some more if you need it. I'll close the door so it's more convenient for you two to chat."

Both doors were tightly shut, and the balcony fell silent again.

Actually, before Ding-*ge* arrived, this mother and son duo already weren't talking all that much.

Earlier in the living room, Mama Lu had calmly asked him what he meant by his previous statement.

To which Lu Boyuan had replied, *My partner is male*.

Mama Lu met his eyes for a long time before she asked if he had any cigarettes. Lu Boyuan went upstairs and got a pack, after which they came out onto the balcony.

For a brief second, both of them felt like they had traveled a few years back in time to the day Lu Boyuan said that he wanted to get into esports instead of going to school. Back then, Mama Lu didn't even know what the concept of "esports" was, so she had searched it up on her phone. The first result that came up was a web forum containing a netizen's opinion—"*Only lazy video game nerds who don't like studying would choose to make gaming their career, and they call it esports to make it seem more professional.*"

Upon seeing that, Mama Lu had instantly smoked two packs of cigarettes in a row.

Lu Boyuan sent a text to Jian Rong, asking if he had applied the ointment yet.

R-ong responded very irritably with two smiling emojis.

Lu Boyuan laughed and locked his phone. He noticed that the person next to him was about to light her third stick, and he said, “Enough, you’re going to get addicted again.”

In her youth, Mama Lu had a tobacco addiction that she couldn’t completely get rid of despite many years of Papa Lu’s earnest persuasion while they were dating in college. It lasted until she got pregnant with Lu Boyuan.

She used to be a little troublemaker, getting into fights and loitering around ice skating rinks, but she also ended up becoming a gentle and virtuous housewife. Perhaps because she had experienced too many things in life, she didn’t actually react that strongly when she found out about her son’s sexual orientation.

“Mn, this is the last one.” Mama Lu blew a smoke ring. “When did this happen? Were you already dating before you brought him home?”

She hadn’t imagined them being together in this way before, which was why she hadn’t paid particularly close attention at the time. But when she thought about it carefully now, she realized that her son had never once

brought anyone home except for Jian Rong, despite having lived on his own for so many years.

Moreover, those brief interactions from earlier… were enough proof.

"It was recent." Knowing that she had seen through him, Lu Boyuan didn't bother denying it needlessly. He paused and emphasized, "I was the one who pursued him."

Mama Lu nodded. "I guessed as much."

She originally wanted to ask Lu Boyuan if he was born this way or if he was bent, but then she remembered how Lu Boyuan seemingly wasn't interested in dating at all in the past. He never met up with any of the young women she introduced to him, nor did he ever mention a girl to her even after competing in esports for all these years…

Mama Lu refrained from asking this unnecessary question.

She thought of something, and her well-shaped eyebrows furrowed slightly. "Is Xiao Rong of age yet?"

"He just turned eighteen."

Mama Lu looked at him with an expression that was more complicated than the one she wore when she found out he liked men. "…isn't eighteen a bit too young?"

Lu Boyuan gave an "*en*." "Fortunately he joined the team late, or else I would've been seducing a minor."

"…"

Mama Lu averted her face, unwilling to pursue this topic any further. She took one last drag on her cigarette before she drank a sip of tea. "Can't you treat your dad a little better? It took him several years just to finish digesting the fact that you compete in esports."

"It'll have to be said eventually. Whether that happens sooner or later, it's all the same." Lu Boyuan lifted his phone and checked his newly received message. It was from Ding-*ge*, urging them to come eat. "Want to stay for lunch?"

"Not this time, your dad is waiting for me at home." Mama Lu put out her cigarette. A long moment later, she said, "The soup that I brought over… make sure you give him a bigger serving."

They didn't have practice today. Everyone was too lazy to go downstairs, so they ate in the little living room on the edge of the third floor.

This living room was much smaller than the one on the first floor, and it was basically filled up once they sat down. A projector screen hung on the wall in front of them, and the room was quite warm and comfortable.

The only thing was—

"*Ge*, we're eating, why are you putting on a video for us called '*HT Best Spring Kills Montage*'?" Xiao Bai held his bowl in both hands, bemused.

"You might be resting, but you can't fall behind on your homework." Ding-*ge* said, "Know yourself, know your enemy, and you will be forever

victorious.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

Jian Rong stared absent-mindedly at the screen, holding his own bowl of abalone sauce noodles. He ate a bite before he pretended to glance carelessly through the gaps in the railing towards the first floor.

Yuan Qian gave an enormous yawn as he sent his girlfriend a voice message, telling her that he was awake. He lifted his head and asked, “Xiao Rong, why are you standing? Is it too crowded? Come over and sit, I’ll make some more room for you…”

“No need.” Jian Rong withdrew his gaze. “I’m not sitting.”

“Don’t be like that, I already don’t feel great watching this kind of video. There’s a lot of pressure with you standing right next to me, it’s like you’re about to bring your fist down and beat me up.” Xiao Bai chimed in, “Come, sit.”

Jian Rong indeed found it a little difficult to restrain his fist.

It wasn’t as if he didn’t want to sit, okay?!

If it was still going to be like this tomorrow, then he might as well just squat on his chair during practice.

By the time Lu Boyuan came upstairs with the soup, everyone was already about done eating.

Ding-*ge* had just finished lecturing the rest of them. He looked up and asked, "Auntie went home?"

Lu Boyuan cast a glance at Jian Rong, who was eating while standing next to the couch like he was being punished, before he quickly shifted his gaze away again. "Mn."

Ding-*ge* nodded. "You came at the perfect time. I bought the cake already, let's cut it now. Who knows if any of you will be able to get out of bed tonight."

For pro gamers, rest = sleep. It was tiring enough sitting in front of their computers every day, and that party last night had basically exhausted all of their remaining energy.

What's more, training resumed tomorrow, since they were going to Korea next week.

Lu Boyuan looked at the trophy sitting on top of the birthday cake and asked flippantly, "Again with the S11 Worlds trophy?"

"No way, wasn't that already put on Jian Rong's cake?" Ding-*ge* smiled. "This is the MVP trophy for this year."

Lu Boyuan: "."

After they cut the cake and drank the soup, the others returned to their rooms to sleep while Ding-*ge* asked Jian Rong for his identity card so he could help him apply for the visa. The base was lively for merely an hour before a peaceful calm was restored.

The soup was steeped with flavor. Jian Rong drank three small bowls all in one go, and when he laid down on Lu Boyuan's bed, he couldn't help but let out a little burp of satisfaction.

His own phone was charging because it had run out of battery, so he was currently browsing through Weibo on Lu Boyuan's phone instead.

"Stuffed?" Lu Boyuan asked, lounging next to him.

Jian Rong hummed and said lazily, "You gave me too much."

He wasn't originally planning on drinking so much of the soup, but then Lu Boyuan kept on refilling his bowl as soon as it was empty, and Jian Rong felt like he would be wasting it if he didn't finish.

Suddenly, Jian Rong caught a faint whiff of cigarette smoke, and his nose twitched. "Did you smoke?"

Lu Boyuan said, "My mom did."

Jian Rong was startled, and he turned his head to say, "Auntie smokes?"

"She was a walking cigarette stick before, but she's better now." The situation wasn't completely settled with his family yet, so Lu Boyuan didn't want to tell Jian Rong this early that he had come out of the closet to them already, to avoid putting any pressure on him.

Lu Boyuan played with Jian Rong's hair and watched as he scrolled randomly through Lu Boyuan's Weibo. "Why were you standing and eating earlier?"

Jian Rong's hand froze in the middle of his scrolling. He felt like it was way too freaking shameful to say that he had been done to the point that he couldn't sit down, so a few seconds passed before he gritted his teeth and said, "I wanted to."

Lu Boyuan held in his laughter. "Did you apply the ointment yet? When I checked this morning, it seemed to be a little red…"

Whenever Jian Rong thought about what happened last night, his ears tingled. He was still browsing through Weibo, but in reality, not a single word was entering his vision. "No, I can heal on my own."

"You sure? We have four or five practice matches tomorrow, you'll be fine sitting for an entire day?"

"…"

"I think we have a practice match scheduled with Squid tomorrow too." Lu Boyuan skillfully paused for two seconds before continuing, "If we lose, Doufu's probably going to act cocky in his stream again."

Jian Rong was convinced. He rejected Lu Boyuan's offer to help and went into the bathroom.

But several minutes later, Lu Boyuan heard the person in the bathroom suck in a breath of cold air, and he still ended up decisively pushing open the door and entering. Amidst the elegant language that Jian Rong unleashed out of shock, Lu Boyuan took the ointment and cotton swab from him.

After the ointment was applied, Jian Rong emerged from the bathroom with, yet again, an unnaturally red face.

Because of the cigarette smoke lingering on him, Lu Boyuan decided to take a shower. Jian Rong returned to the bed but couldn't fall asleep, and he also wasn't really interested in continuing to scroll through Weibo. As a result, he got Lu Boyuan's permission to use his gaming laptop.

Worried that lying on his stomach would affect his mechanics, Jian Rong didn't go on the Korean server. Instead, he logged into his Chinese side account to smurf.

Very soon after he logged in, someone with the ID "I'll Definitely Work Hard Next Season" sent him a party invite.

Jian Rong never added strangers, both on his main and alternate accounts, so everyone who entered his friends list was a friend. He couldn't remember who this ID belonged to, so he decided to just accept the invite.

The instant he entered the lobby, a familiar voice sounded in his earphones. "Aye will try to send an invite, but Soft might not want to play with meh, he likes solo queue. Meh? Aye like solo queue too, but Aye also like playing with Soft or XIU-*ge*… ah, Soft came in~"

Jian Rong checked the date. "Is your team not on vacation after getting second place?"

Savior: "…"

Because of the scandal incident, Savior didn't have any plans to return home during break, and the only older brother in their base who was willing to take him out to play was currently bedridden and unable to move. As a result, he simply chose to stream and practice instead to get some hours in for his streaming quota.

Savior asked, "Why aren't you on your main?"

"It's hard to play lying down. I'm gonna smurf a little and then go to sleep." Jian Rong asked leisurely, "Are you starting it or not?"

Jian Rong had grown used to gaming a lot for training, and he felt weird since he hadn't played at all the day before. So for once, he chose to fill, thinking that he would play support for two games to lull him to sleep; but then, he ended up filling in as jungler.

Upon entering the game, he saw that his opponent was Fighting Tiger's jungler.

Jian Rong's worst role was jungler. He could still squeak by with it in a Diamond game, but it was a bit lacking if he was up against a pro player.

Lu Boyuan came out from the shower just in time to see Jian Rong be pummeled to death by the opposing mid laner and jungler near the enemy's blue buff.

Looking at his dark expression as he bought items, Lu Boyuan asked, amused, "So dedicated to your job?"

“I’m just playing a few games because I couldn’t fall asleep.” Jian Rong frowned. “This bastard’s ganked me three times with a teammate already, he’s definitely doing it on purpose…”

Lu Boyuan let out a soft laugh and said casually, “Give me a kiss, and I’ll sub in for you.”

Two gold bursts of light appeared in the game—Jian Rong, who had just arrived at the mid lane, and Savior both used their flashes at the same time.

The opposing mid laner was scared witless. He thought that there were a million enemies surrounding him or something, so he also tossed out his flash. After that, he sent a “?” in the all chat.

Savior was stuck in a state of shock and confusion, filled with thoughts like “*did Aye hear that right*,” “*definitely not*,” “*it seems like my Chinese still isn’t good enough*.” Then, the voice that all pro players were extremely familiar with rang out once again in his headphones—

“Oh right, I washed your underwear for you yesterday…”

The voice abruptly cut off.

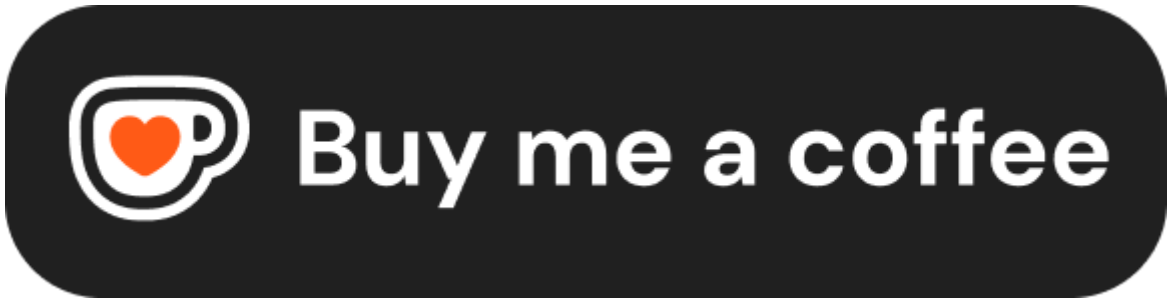
Jian Rong, who had come to gank, stood there for a very long time in the mid lane and didn’t move. Several seconds earlier, he had left the team voice chat.

Like a child that had accidentally exposed their parent’s secret, Savior chewed anxiously and helplessly on his lower lip. He watched with wide eyes as the number of viewers in his stream instantly skyrocketed.

A horde of ruthless netizens stormed in with IDs like “Soft’s Dear Dad,” “Dumbass Soft Won But Isn’t Streaming,” “Road’s Sole Online Dating Partner,” “Road’s Unrevealed Wife,” and “TTC’s Mid Laner And Jungler Are Getting Married Tonight.” There were so many comments in the barrage that Savior, as a noob at Chinese, had no way of holding his own against them.

Two seconds later, the voice that Savior had set up to automatically thank viewers for their gifts sounded—

A mechanical female voice announced mercilessly, “Thank you ‘Be A Rational Gay, Reject Subbing In, Where’s The Underwear, Let Dad See’ for your Meteor Shower.”



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ICDI Chapter 118: .

Thanks to riingo, Kitty, and Ko-fi Supporter for the Ko-fis!

Jian Rong laid on the bed, stunned. He didn't even react when his character on the screen was beaten to death by the enemy mid laner and jungler.

He suddenly remembered something: on his way to Ningbo, he had used the last of his phone battery to see all the water friends guessing whether Lu Boyuan's partner with the short, dyed hair was this female streamer or that female host. He was so angry that he sat there being blasted by the wind coming in from the car window for quite a while, to the point that his face was almost paralyzed.

He even thought about directly forwarding that video of the post-match interview and captioning it with "*stop guessing, it's your dad*."

Jian Rong always tended to behave impulsively without taking into account the consequences of his actions. For example, back when Jian Rong saw Lu Boyuan doing his best to carry his teammates, while Kan was doing his best to feed, he had immediately plunged into the team fight and mocked Kan for matchfixing in his stream.

How could he not know that saying such a thing would cause him to be flamed by fans?

But he didn't care. You can flame however you want, and I'll mock however I want.

Only when it came to Lu Boyuan did Jian Rong ever so rarely back down.

Lu Boyuan had been up on the pedestal for too long, so if it was suddenly exposed that he was dating someone on the team, and that his partner was a man to boot… Jian Rong couldn't imagine the aftermath.

Jian Rong watched as his teammates pinged question marks at him in the game. He thought to himself, upset, *What's so bad about just going to sleep with your boyfriend? Why'd you have to freaking go and play a game instead…*

When Lu Boyuan saw Jian Rong frantically exit the team voice chat, he lifted an eyebrow. "Duo queue?"

"Mn." Jian Rong forcefully rubbed his face. A long moment later, he squeezed out, "With Savior… he seems to be streaming."

There was silence next to him, and Jian Rong licked his lips. "I didn't have time to tell you…"

Jian Rong swallowed the remainder of his sentence back down—Lu Boyuan kneaded the nape of his neck a few times. He had just finished showering, and his fingers were cool to the touch. "The AFK warning is up."

In League, an AFK warning would appear if you stood without moving for a period of time, and you would be kicked if you continued to AFK even after receiving the warning.

But Jian Rong hardly had the energy to care about that. Right as he was about to say something, Lu Boyuan tossed his towel onto the chair and

propped a knee on the bed. He rubbed Jian Rong's neck and prompted, "Make some room for me and go to sleep, I'll sub in for you."

Jian Rong shifted to the side, his mind in chaos.

Jian Rong was playing Lee Sin this time, and it was a Diamond game too. As a result, despite Fighting Tiger's jungler being on the other team and Jian Rong's tiny disadvantage in the early game, Lu Boyuan was still able to create various opportunities for his teammates once he took charge.

After Lu Boyuan stole Baron during a critical team fight and headed straight towards the enemy base, Fighting Tiger's jungler finally started to seek out interaction—

[[All] ZHmmd: God Lu, is that you?]

[[All] Don't Interact If You're Solo Killed: Mn]

With that, Lu Boyuan destroyed the other team's Nexus and won the ranked game.

He asked, "Still wanna play?"

Jian Rong: "…no, I'm done."

Lu Boyuan let Savior know in the chat and left the party.

Lu Boyuan closed his laptop and turned his head to see Jian Rong in the middle of creating a new Weibo side account on his phone. He raised an eyebrow. "Why're you making a side account? I have one."

Jian Rong shook his head. “I won’t use yours.”

He was going to use this side account to fight the people flaming Lu Boyuan.

Jian Rong entered a ‘28’ in for his age, so that people wouldn’t accuse him of being a schoolchild during arguments.

Actually, he had another side account, but that account had liked and forwarded posts from his and Lu Boyuan’s supertopic before. In the end, he still decided to create a new account so that his activity on the other one couldn’t be exploited by antis.

Once the account was created, Jian Rong charged into TTC’s supertopic, ready to wage war for three days and three nights with the antis. Unexpectedly, before he could read a single Weibo post, the person next to him hooked an arm around his neck and hauled him over.

Lu Boyuan looked at him, head propped up on his hand. “Right now, you’re basically wearing the same expression that you wore during the finals.”

Jian Rong didn’t know what expression was on his face at that moment. Upon hearing that, he subconsciously pressed his lips together.

Lu Boyuan asked, “Don’t want people to know we’re together?”

“That’s not it,” Jian Rong replied very swiftly. He fell silent for a few seconds before he lifted a hand and rubbed his face. He said truthfully, “…I don’t want you to be flamed.”

He remembered the female mid laner that Ding-*ge* had rejected previously in order to avoid a workplace romance, and the look on his face grew even worse. “Will there be a punishment when the team finds out about this?”

Lu Boyuan let out a soft huff of laughter. All of a sudden, he asked, “Are you of age yet?”

Jian Rong was slightly taken aback by the question that came out of nowhere. “…what do you think?”

Lu Boyuan: “Did we win the championship the day before yesterday?”

“…mn.”

“Have we ever skipped a practice match?”

“No.”

“In that case, seeing as how I’m not going for a minor, it hasn’t affected our competitive performance, and we haven’t ditched any practice matches…” Lu Boyuan pinched his ear. “What would the team have to care about? The contract never said that team members aren’t allowed to date.

“And also… sweetheart[1], I’ve been in the pro scene for six years now. Do you think I’m still afraid of being flamed?”

The current esports circle was already considered to be quite harmonious. Back when LoL was just beginning to become an esport, the streaming industry was also in its early stages. Some pro players didn’t even have moderators in their livestream rooms, and their barrages were utterly

appalling. The matches couldn't be held in stadiums either, so the pro players and audience members were separated by only a short distance. If they didn't perform well, they could immediately hear the audience's ridicule and derision the moment they took off their headphones.

Jian Rong was instantly dazed by that "*sweetheart*."

That bit of anxiousness from before promptly disappeared, and the ear that Lu Boyuan was ravaging visibly flushed red.

Lu Boyuan was especially fond of watching Jian Rong's body turn red. As a result, he almost imperceptibly increased the force behind his fingers.

Jian Rong swallowed, completely oblivious. "Then – if your family happens to see the news…"

"I've already told my mom."

Jian Rong's eyes shot up and widened slightly.

"I came out of the closet to her earlier, downstairs." Lu Boyuan's voice was light. "I didn't say it was you… but she still guessed it."

Jian Rong couldn't help but recall his appearance from when he went downstairs to open the door.

He had randomly grabbed his clothes from the closet, and because they hadn't been ironed, they were so wrinkled that it looked like someone had thrown them into a laundry basin and trampled over them 199 times. He hadn't washed his face or brushed his teeth, his eyes had been a little

swollen from not sleeping well the night before, and oh yeah, he hadn't even attempted to rake a hand through his hair…

Jian Rong's heart felt even heavier than it would if he had lost an argument. "And then what? She told you to break up with me?"

"No." Lu Boyuan said, "She told me to give you more soup."

"…"

Jian Rong blinked twice before he braced his hand against the bed and made to get up. Lu Boyuan asked, "Where are you going?"

With a wooden expression, Jian Rong said, "To drink soup."

Lu Boyuan laughed gently and grabbed his arm, tugging him back down. "You don't have to, you're not at that degree of frailty yet… pay the bill you owe me first."

"How the hell am I frail…" Jian Rong paused. "What bill?"

"Why don't you tell me?" Lu Boyuan said, amused, "Honestly, even at my poorest, I didn't accept when someone offered to pay me 3,000 *yuan* to boost them one tier. That just now was my first time ever doing this kind of business. I got your points for you and MVP too, so you can't possibly back out now, can you?"

The corners of Jian Rong's mouth twitched. He went quiet for a long time before he finally said, "3,000 for one tier? You're so expensive."

After that, he lowered his eyelids, gripped Lu Boyuan's shirt collar, and tilted his head to kiss him.

Daily web use peaked between the evening hours of eight and midnight.

Two phones chimed for quite a while next to the bed before someone finally paid attention to them.

In "TTC's Fierce Men Workout Club," several messages popped up one after another, and it sounded like they were talking in riddles—

[P-Baby's Little Support: .]

[Pine: ?]

[Yuan Qian: ?????????]

[Yuan Qian: Did you guys see the underwear?]

[Yuan Qian recalled a message.]

[Yuan Qian: Did you guys see the video?]

[P-Baby's Little Support: I'm on my 23rd loop right now.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Despicable!!! Savior actually got to reap the benefits of this amazing stream traffic!!!]

[R: Zhuang Yibai, you bored?]

Jian Rong only realized that he was using Lu Boyuan's phone when the profile picture of the ragdoll cat popped up.

His style was too distinctive, so he was easily recognized with just a few words.

[P-Baby's Little Support: Damn, you're still in my *ge*'s room?!]

[P-Baby's Little Support: And you're using my *ge*'s phone?]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Respect the other person and don't snoop through their phone, don't you know that!]

[R: …are you telling me what to do?]

[Pine: How come you still haven't changed your nickname yet?]

[Yuan Qian: ……]

[Yuan Qian: Why are you all so calm… am I misunderstanding something about that video?]

[Yuan Qian: Why isn't Ding-*ge* talking? Though it's a bit cruel to say this, he couldn't have fainted dead away from anger, right…]

[Pine: He went to bed early. He said he's going to look after his well-being today.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: P-baby and I have gotten over it already.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Reality is often much more exciting than the Internet.]

[Yuan Qian: So? Captain and Xiao Rong… really are in that kind of relationship???]

[P-Baby's Little Support: This is very complicated, let me explain it to you in a PM Qian-*ge*.]

Lu Boyuan was playing Fight the Landlord on Jian Rong's phone. In his peripheral vision, he just happened to spot Jian Rong typing furiously.

[R: You can say it right here]

Lu Boyuan restrained a smile. He felt like if it weren't for the fact that Jian Rong still hadn't recovered his energy yet, he could've brandished a knife and stood next to Xiao Bai to watch him type.

[P-Baby's Little Support: You're the one who told me to say it here!]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Yes, that's right Qian-*ge*, they're precisely in that kind of inappropriate relationship where they sleep in the same room during a competition and kiss in the suite after winning the championship in a way that's even bolder than what you do with our sister-in-law.]

[Yuan Qian: .]

Jian Rong wanted to stab someone, but unfortunately, his physical condition didn't permit him to do so. At the same time, he really couldn't think of a single freaking retort.

Lu Boyuan saw him smash the phone into the pillow, and he asked with amusement, "Not chatting anymore?"

Jian Rong buried half his face in the pillow too and said in a muffled voice, "No, going to sleep."

Today was their last day off. Once training resumed, Jian Rong would have to go back and sleep in his own room.

As a result, after he closed his eyes for a short moment, he couldn't help but ask, "You're not sleeping?"

Lu Boyuan was the landlord this game, and he immediately put his cards on autopilot. Then, in light of the hint hidden in that question, he effortlessly tugged Jian Rong into his embrace.

Early the next morning, a roar traveled out from TTC's base, belonging to someone who wanted to silently endure it but truly couldn't fucking take it anymore—

"733 days, an entire 733 days… for 733 days, I haven't turned off my phone once. Only yesterday, I was so tired from running around all over the place applying for your visas that when I got home, I didn't even notice that I had plugged my charger into my phone case. My phone was off for one day—just one day!

"And oh boy, I woke up to 133 missed calls and over 2,000 PMs on Weibo bringing this to my attention—even if you add up all the PMs I've ever received, it won't hit 2,000. I open my eyes and bam, incredible, an enthusiastic mass reporting of our jungler subbing in for someone else.

"At that moment, I laughed, because who the hell could hire our jungler to sub in for them? And I thought to myself, no dumbass would do this kind of thing that leads to a competition ban. I didn't expect… didn't expect…"

Ding-*ge* said hatefully, "It would've been better if you had actually gone to be a fucking booster!!!"

Lu Boyuan shook his head. Exhaustion from just waking up seeped into his voice. "That's unlikely to happen, I never do things that violate the rules."

Jian Rong: "…"

Ding-*ge*: "…"

Xiao Bai saw that Ding-*ge* looked like he was about to collapse, and he hastily comforted him. "*Ge*, hang in there, you still have to help get Jian Rong his visa."

Ding-*ge*: "……"

The urge to stab someone grew even stronger in Ding-*ge*.

"*Ge*, calm down a little," Yuan Qian said as he bit into an apple. After a night passed, his emotions had already settled down significantly. "Actually, this isn't really that serious of an issue."

Ding-*ge*: "Mhm, this isn't serious, it'll only be serious once they produce a child someday, huh?"

Ding-*ge* had come to violently scold them too early. Jian Rong was still so sleepy that tears were springing up in his eyes, and he said without thinking, "Can't give birth."

Lu Boyuan paused for a moment before nodding. "That's true."

A brief silence descended over the living room.

Xiao Bai shot him a "*so that's how it is*" look.

Jian Rong: "…"

My fucking… am I a dumbass?!

"It genuinely isn't that big of a problem," Yuan Qian said. "Think about it. Only two things were said, and it's not like there was video footage to go with it, so what does it prove? Xiao Bai's even called Pine husband before in the past and nothing came out of that. What's so bad about just saying 'underwear'?"

Ding-*ge* frowned. "Is that comparable? All the netizens are well aware of how Xiao Bai acts. Even if some video of him and Pine were to be leaked one day, those netizens would probably think that it's just a show…"

"Stop! What's this got to do with P-baby and me?" Xiao Bai immediately expressed his discontentment. "We have a pure and clean rot-selling relationship."

Pine glanced at the yogurt in his hand that he had opened a second ago. Then he tilted his head back and drank it all in one go.

Yuan Qian burst out laughing. "My personal opinion is this—although the LPL hasn't rejected homosexuality, they've never expressed any other attitudes towards it either. Maybe we should just play dead for now… netizens have very poor memories. If we refuse to say anything about this,

they'll transition from certainty to doubt, and they'll eventually forget about it altogether."

Pine said indifferently, "Mn. Without visual proof, it's useless no matter how much the netizens think about it."

Xiao Bai nodded in agreement before he recalled something and turned his head to ask, "You guys won't be photographed, right?"

Jian Rong stared coldly at him, chewing on his milk straw.

Xiao Bai: "I was just checking…"

"I've thought of all that before too, but… I promised our financial backer that Xiao Lu would stream today." Ding-*ge* wore a mask of pain. "He hasn't streamed for over a month already, so I was thinking that since we happen to have two hours of free practice at noon today, streaming wouldn't interfere with anything…"

Lu Boyuan said mildly, "Then I'll stream."

Everyone was startled.

Xiao Bai instantly tried to persuade him out of it. "Wait… *ge*, if you do it today, even if they gave you fifty room mods it might not be effective."

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. "Do I have a choice?"

And that was the problem.

“You don’t.” There were tears concealed in Ding-*ge*’s smile. “StarTV’s official Weibo sent out the promotion material last night, and they pinned it too. They also put you up on StarTV’s biggest publicity spot for an entire day…”

So, he still had to stream.

But Ding-*ge* wasn’t willing to give up. After careful deliberation, he activated the capitalist’s ult—he hired a water army for the barrage.

Needing a water army for the LPL’s magnificent number one celebrity pro player and his stream, who the hell would believe him if he tried to explain.

Lu Boyuan felt hot, so he changed into a short-sleeved shirt before his stream started. He entered the practice room just in time to see his boyfriend, who was gaming absent-mindedly, miss a siege minion.

“Don’t push the lane anymore, the other team’s jungler is about to arrive.” Jian Rong’s hair was ruffled by someone as Lu Boyuan’s voice floated down from above him. “You’re really not going to duo queue with me in a bit?”

Jian Rong let out an “*oh*” and obediently moved his champion under the tower before he mercilessly refused. “Not this time… Ding-*ge* told us not to queue together today, he doesn’t have it easy either.”

Though he said that, a minute before Lu Boyuan’s stream began, Jian Rong still went to camp in his livestream room.

Of course, he was on his side account.

The moment Jian Rong entered the stream, he could tell Ding-*ge*'s water army was in the barrage—

[So excited for God Lu's stream!]

[Excited excited, I've been waiting for so long.]

[I want it to start soon, I've already been anticipating this forever.]

[I feel like this is a great stream.]

Jian Rong: "…"

For better or worse, TTC was still the LPL's top powerhouse team, couldn't they be a little more professional?

Right as Jian Rong was internally roasting the water army, the stream started a second later, and Lu Boyuan's computer desktop appeared on the screen.

Simultaneously, the stream's barrage erupted like a volcano. Words layered densely over each other, creating an extremely shocking effect in the barrage—

[Was today's underwear washed]

[Was today's underwear washed]

[I feel like this is a great stream.]

[Was today's underwear washed]

[Was today's underwear washed]

[Was today's underwear washed]

...

Translation Notes

1. *He says baobei here, in case you'd like to think of it as such when you're reading* ^

Yan: Jian Rong this entire chapter: duck_holding_knife.jpg.

Edit to add a note on the baobei part: Long story short, if something can be translated into English with similar connotations as its Chinese equivalent, and it doesn't make the translation sound extremely unnatural, I will translate it. To me, baobei very much falls under that category, so I translated it and will continue to translate it in the future. (other examples: jiayou, niubi) Personally, I just don't like leaving those words in pinyin, but that's also my own preference. ^ ^

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 119: When we're dating, we definitely can't be outdone by the other person

Jian Rong was currently in the middle of a team fight. Because of a positioning mistake, he ate the other side's CC, and soon afterwards his screen went gray.

He sucked in a deep breath of air and typed in the chat: [My fault.]

His team's support immediately replied: [No no no, it was my fault. I went to comment in God Lu's stream just now, so I didn't have time to use Mikael's[1] on you.]

Jian Rong: […]

Since it was the mid-late game, the death timer was several dozen seconds long. Jian Rong stared at the thousands and thousands of identical comments that had been spamming the barrage for almost an entire minute. Finally, he couldn't help but pull out his phone and send two comments himself:

[Guest849248: Looking forward to it, can God Lu start the game quickly?]

As soon as he hit enter, it was drowned out amidst the boundless sea of comments.

Jian Rong gritted his teeth and started typing again—

[Guest849248: Can't you all comment something with more substance? What are the people who want to properly watch the stream supposed to

look at with you all acting like this?]

This time, someone paid attention to him, and they even responded to him through a private message.

[Soft's Dear Dad whispered to you: Don't be up in your dad's business about the comments being sent, and don't try to control what kind of content my son-in-law is streaming. If you wanna watch, then watch. If not, get lost.]

Jian Rong: "?"

Jian Rong clicked on the water friend's profile, wanting to ban them. It was only when he couldn't find the option to do so that he remembered this wasn't his stream, and that he also wasn't on his main account, which had moderator privileges in Lu Boyuan's livestream room.

He warned himself that he couldn't get on his main account, that he couldn't let them provoke him, as he messaged Lu Boyuan on WeChat.

[R-ong: You can silence the entire chat in the stream. If you right click on the comment section, it's the option at the very bottom. You can also set the ban time on your end.]

[R-ong: If you feel bothered… just ban them directly]

Lu Boyuan hadn't expected these people to be so capable of spamming either. He picked up his phone and checked the texts before he answered with an "*okay*." Then he put his phone back down and said mildly, "If you all keep spamming, the entire chat will have to be silenced for today's stream."

The barrage thought that Lu Boyuan was worried about his stream being banned, so it really did calm down a bit.

[How come we can't even say the words 'washing underwear' anymore? Is this a forbidden phrase in the stream? Who established that? Does that person not wash their underwear?]

[I'm begging you please turn on your video!]

[God Lu knows how to silence the chat? As far as I can remember, God Lu hasn't ever even banned someone before.]

Lu Boyuan said, "I just learned how."

[Dammit, which mod corrupted God Lu?!]

[You're overthinking things, the mods can't talk to God Lu. I bet that person did it.]

[Which person?]

[That person. I don't dare to go into detail, you can use your intuition. I can only help you out with two reminders: short, dyed hair]

[The one who doesn't know how to wash his own underwear.]

Lu Boyuan heard the sound of a water cup being slammed down heavily against the computer desk behind him, and he held back his laughter. "Let's play on the domestic server today."

The game finished updating. As soon as Lu Boyuan logged into the server, Ding-*ge* sent him a text telling him to turn on his video. After all, this was the first time someone on their team was streaming since they won the spring championship. The platform had invested a lot of money into marketing it, so it was hardly justifiable if he didn't turn on his camera.

Lu Boyuan didn't actually care either way. His cursor shifted over to the webcam software icon, but right as he was about to click on it, he suddenly moved the cursor away again.

Lu Boyuan looked behind him and called out evenly, "God Jian."

Jian Rong had just entered a new game and couldn't see what Lu Boyuan was doing. Because of the "God" title, it took him a few seconds to react. "… what is it?"

"Ding-*ge* told me to turn on my video." Lu Boyuan's tone of voice was the same as usual. "I don't really know how, come help me figure it out?"

The game was still on the champion select screen, so it wasn't really a big deal if he left; the departing player would only lose three LP.

Jian Rong unhesitatingly quit the game and got up to help Lu Boyuan adjust his video.

When Jian Rong walked over to the computer, he saw that Lu Boyuan's barrage was filled with question marks.

He didn't think much of it. He opened up the webcam software for Lu Boyuan, and they both appeared simultaneously on camera.

Jian Rong had bent forward to make it easier to operate the software. Lu Boyuan hadn't moved away from him either, and at that moment, if he turned his head and leaned in a little more, he would bump against Jian Rong's face.

They were frequently in close contact with each other these days, so they didn't think that this distance meant much. But the spectating masses were already about to explode in a frenzy—

[Good good good!! Congrats on your marriage, may you give birth to a son soon!!!]

[The one with the dyed, short hair, do you mind leaning a bit closer to your husband? Or else there's no way to take this marriage photo.]

[Fffff am I the only person seeing the hickeys on God Lu's neck?!]

[I also saw it!!!]

[Son, isn't this a little excessive? The other person washed your underwear for you, and you bit him into this state? Are you a dog?]

Jian Rong was startled for a second. Then, he immediately lowered his head and glanced at Lu Boyuan's neck.

There were two ambiguous marks on the left side of Lu Boyuan's neck. Never mind his neck, there were even some on his collarbones, but it was blocked by his shirt. Jian Rong could only make out a faint trace of it because of his current angle.

Yesterday night, he wasn't able to control himself while they were kissing… and left those marks behind.

Xiao Bai, who was spying on them the entire time from the side, instantly stood up and moseyed over. "Let me see too, it isn't very clear in the video. How come I didn't notice it earlier…"

Before he could finish his sentence, he was nailed back into his seat by a chilly look from Jian Rong.

Jian Rong abruptly remembered something, and he frantically reached up to yank his own shirt collar up. He forcefully tugged a large part of his shirt backwards so that its wide, rounded collar concealed most of his neck.

Then, he said expressionlessly, "What the hell are you all talking about? They're mosquito bites."

For the sake of not hindering Jian Rong's movements, Lu Boyuan was sprawled back leisurely in his chair. Upon hearing that, he couldn't help but cover his mouth with his hand.

If he smiled now, he would be sabotaging his boyfriend a bit.

Actually, Jian Rong didn't really need to hide anything. These water friends had all come to the stream today equipped with magnifying glasses, so if something truly did exist, they would've spotted it a long time ago already.

Lu Boyuan had anticipated this problem well in advance. From the start, he hadn't left marks in places where other people could see them.

[WTF are you covering up for? Lift up your shirt fearlessly and let your daddies see!!]

[You didn't freaking stream after your penta kill or the championship win, what's the meaning of that? Did your kidneys grow weak[2] after resting for two days, so you can't stream anymore?]

[Right now, I'm rationally speculating that this dumbass went to the temple last time to seek a fated marriage.]

[Which temple was it again? I wanna pay my respects too!!]

[Dumbass darling, I PM'd you on Weibo. It's a quality good from Taobao that Dad considered and picked out for you with the utmost care. If you put them in your shoes, you and Road will be about the same height. Remember, when we're dating, we definitely can't be outdone by the other person, or else you'll be losing out!]

[How thoughtful. I watched a video of their team leaving the stage after winning the spring season. In terms of height, he is indeed aiming a bit out of his league.]

[Don't say that, the little dumbass has his own outstanding qualities too. For example… for example… never mind, God Lu, look out for yourself. You mustn't endure it if you become a victim of domestic violence one day, you can come tell us in SoftBar, we'll definitely be on your side.]

Each word stabbed him in the core.

Jian Rong still ended up being provoked.

“The camera’s adjusted.” Jian Rong held up his collar like a fool as he straightened up and asked, “…can I come AFK in your stream?”

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. “It’s up to you.”

Jian Rong returned to his seat and boldly entered Lu Boyuan’s stream on his main account.

[You have time to AFK in a livestream room, but you don’t have time to actually stream? Even if you just streamed without talking, that would freaking be okay too.]

[How come I have a bad feeling about this?]

[Dumbass, it’s all Daddy’s fault that you ended up like this. I don’t have time to look after you because I’m usually so busy outside. I sent a tutorial to your Weibo that shows you how to wash your underwear, study it when you get a chance so you don’t have to trouble God Lu in the future anymore.]

[Shit—this dumbass has mod privileges! He came in to ban people! There goes my main again!!]

[…I just knew that this power-crazed dog didn’t have any good intentions!]

[Fuck everyone run away!!]

Lu Boyuan watched as his boyfriend went on a killing spree. Then, he shifted his mouse and promoted Jian Rong’s account to the highest moderator tier.

In reality, the only difference between a senior moderator and a normal moderator was that the former had the right to change the stream name. The process to do so was a bit annoying since they had to switch over to the back-end first, so there was only one senior mod per livestream room.

Lu Boyuan's intentions were very clear: Jian Rong could ban as he pleased.

Although Jian Rong banned a lot of accounts, he was mostly going for the ones that had "Soft" in their username or were sporting badges from Jian Rong's stream.

Jian Rong was a veteran power-crazed dog. To him and his water friends, banning and kicking were just another form of interaction; the water friends were already used to it, so they didn't create any other disturbances because of his actions. The barrage gradually returned to normal in Lu Boyuan's stream.

Lu Boyuan went to solo queue. As he was waiting to be matched, he continued to watch Jian Rong ban people with great intrigue and occasionally answered a few of the water friends' questions.

"When are you going to Korea… if there aren't any issues with the visas, it should be next week.

"Have you broken ties with XIU? I haven't for now. He reached out to me yesterday because he wanted me to buy something for him, but I ignored it.

"Did you really sub in…" After Lu Boyuan read that question out loud, he gave a lazy laugh. "It wasn't convenient for him to play, so I helped finish

the game for him, and I didn't accept any money for it… that doesn't count as being a booster, right?"

The water friends realized something—even though Lu Boyuan didn't directly acknowledge their relationship, he had never once denied it either.

Understanding instantly dawned on everyone. From the get-go, Lu Boyuan hadn't planned on hiding anything. Perhaps he just wasn't admitting to it fully for the sake of his team or the LPL's management.

As a result, they deliberately made their own questions more vague and started digging even deeper—

"Did you spend your birthday with your partner yesterday… I did.

"What gift did he give you… you want to know this too? A belt."

The mere mention of that belt was enough to make Jian Rong close his eyes. He took a gulp of his water and did his best to focus his attention back on the game.

Luckily, he was filling in as support this time, so there wasn't too much pressure on him.

Right as Jian Rong was contemplating whether or not he should turn down the volume of Lu Boyuan's stream a little, he heard Lu Boyuan read out quietly, "Would you help wash your partner's underwear…"

With a *thunk*, he accidentally ate one of the ADC's siege minions.

The Korean ADC player immediately stopped in place and pinged countless "?" over Jian Rong's game character.

Lu Boyuan: "I would."

Thunk—Jian Rong accidentally killed another one of the minions that the ADC was about to eat.

Jian Rong was too well-known in the higher tiers for his recent antics of screwing over Korean trolls. The ADC thought that Jian Rong was purposefully messing with him, so he promptly used his flash and heal before he fed and went back to the base to AFK.

Then, he angrily started chatting from the fountain: [sbLPL! sbSoft[3]!!!]

As luck would have it, the top laner, mid laner, and support were all Chinese players this round.

The top laner: [*Did this dumbass Soft troll you? No worries, just let us know how you want to deal with him this game.*]

The mid laner: [sbLCK! fwADC[4]!]

Jian Rong: "…"

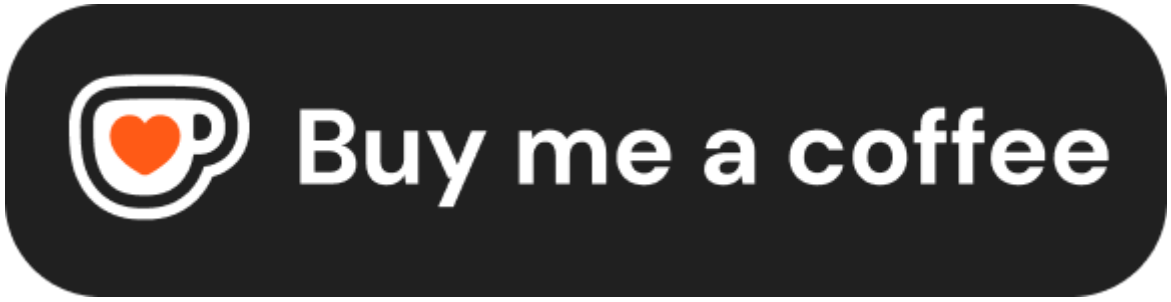
At that moment, Ding-*ge* was in the office deciding what staff to take with them on their trip to Korea. He suddenly received a call from the assistant manager, who said that their mid laner and jungler were acting extremely unrestrained; the only thing left for them to do was get married in the stream.

Ding-*ge* shut his eyes serenely as he said lightly and slowly, “Mn, they haven’t gotten married yet, right? …that’s fine then. You don’t have to keep an eye on them anymore, I turned off the stream a long time ago.”

You two can do whatever you want. In any case, I don’t want to be alive anymore either.

Translation Notes

1. *Mikael’s Crucible: an item for supports that can remove crowd control* ^
2. *In traditional Chinese medicine, kidneys are associated with determination/willpower* ^
3. *Sb = abbreviation for 傻逼 (sha bi) = dumbass* ^
4. *Fw = abbreviation for 废物 (fei wu) = trash* ^



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ICDI Chapter 120: Mind your own business, I'm your dad—Soft

They had practice matches later in the day, so Lu Boyuan stopped streaming after less than three hours.

But that didn't stop his stream replay from being downloaded by countless people who edited and compiled together his conversation with Jian Rong, along with all of his responses to the "partner"-related questions. Then, they uploaded and shared the videos with their brothers and sisters on the internet. It didn't take long before it ended up on the hot search.

Ding-*ge* didn't take any measures to address this. At this point, it was too hypocritical of them to suppress the hot search or deny anything. In the first place, they were simply an esports team, and he also had more pressing issues at hand to deal with.

They had three practice matches scheduled in the afternoon. By the time they were done, it was already dark outside, and the streetlights were just beginning to flicker on.

Lu Boyuan was treating them to takeout tonight. The delivery driver's call came in, and Lu Boyuan answered it briefly before he went downstairs to retrieve the food. Ding-*ge* was afraid that his hand couldn't lift something that heavy, and since he had business to discuss with Lu Boyuan as well, he went down to help him before Jian Rong could.

Xiao Bai stood up and gave a huge stretch. “I can’t, I can’t. I’m so hungry that I don’t even know how to throw out my hook anymore.”

Jian Rong closed the match overview. “Do you think that can excuse you from the fact that you only landed two hooks this entire game?”

Xiao Bai wasn’t ashamed in the slightest about his innumerable foolish plays in the last game. “My *ge* said before that you can’t blame your teammates for losing a game… but does my *ge* only listen to you now?”

As they were talking, Jian Rong unplugged his and Lu Boyuan’s peripherals before he gathered them up in his arms and got ready to return to the practice room.

Xiao Bai assessed his behavior and questioned curiously, “Or are you the one who listens to my *ge*?”

At the end of his patience, Jian Rong set down the peripherals and tugged up his short sleeves, revealing his skinny arms. “Why don’t you ask my fist that question.”

In the end, the fight didn’t erupt, because Xiao Bai bolted and vanished.

That evening, everyone ate dinner while watching MSI’s play-in stage[1].

Although the Spring Split champion of every competitive region could participate in the “League of Legends’ Mid-Season Invitational,” not every league’s champion could directly enter the group stage.

There were twelve professional leagues and twelve spring champions. Only six teams could participate in the main event.

Of those six spots, four were fixed: the LPL, the professional league for mainland China; the LCK, the professional league for Korea; the LEC, the professional league for Europe; and the LCS, the professional league for North America.

Because of their outstanding performance at last year's Worlds, these four professional leagues were qualified to immediately enter MSI's group stage.

The other eight "wildcard teams" would need to fight for the last two remaining places via the play-in stage.

Wildcard teams referred to teams from professional leagues that didn't have a mature LoL competitive system yet. As a whole, the competitive regions that these teams belonged to weren't very strong, so they weren't allocated much in terms of the prize pool. For example, these leagues included VCS, the professional region for Vietnam; LJL, the professional region for Japan; and the TCL, the professional region for Turkey.

To put it simply: the weaker teams competed first.

In order to participate in the play-in stage, these teams had arrived in Korea earlier. The play-in stage had already advanced to the second match, in which Japan was playing against Turkey.

Before this, Jian Rong didn't even really watch the LPL's tournaments, much less those of the wildcard regions. So he had only ever heard other people

say that these teams were quite weak; this was still his first time watching them compete in an official tournament.

He watched as three players from Japan's team surrounded Turkey's top laner.

Turkey's jungler seemed to have a premonition that something was about to happen, and he instantly relinquished the monster at hand and hurried towards the top lane.

Yuan Qian swallowed a bite of his chicken drumstick. "This jungler has pretty decent awareness…"

Before he could finish, there was a *whoosh*—Turkey's jungler flashed in an attempt to save his encircled teammate and collided into the wall.

Jian Rong: "…"

Xiao Bai ducked his head and shoveled some rice into his mouth. "Damn, brilliant move!"

Lu Boyuan sat cross-legged, with his knee pressed firmly against Jian Rong's thigh.

Seeing the bemused "*how did these teams even make it into the international competition*" written across Jian Rong's face, Lu Boyuan said in amusement, "The LPL has never lost a single match in the play-in stages before."

He paused briefly before adding, “That’s including Squid. They also won all their games against wildcard teams.”

Jian Rong raised an eyebrow and immediately understood the strength level of the wildcard regions.

Originally, it seemed like the Turkish jungler’s terrible play would be enough to blow up the early game, but unexpectedly, both teams’ junglers encountered each other again in the jungle two minutes later. Despite being a level higher, the Japanese jungler was solo killed.

Yuan Qian: “As long as there’s a little mistake, this skill will be able to land on someone.”

Pine lowered his eyes and took a sip of coffee. “After a year, they’re still staying true to themselves.”

“You know, I really do want to play against them.” Xiao Bai grinned. “Look how cheerful they are.”

“Don’t worry, there’ll be plenty of opportunities for you guys to play.” Ding-*ge* walked into the room, holding his phone. “The visas are settled, I’m planning on booking the flight for next Wednesday.”

Jian Rong paused in the middle of eating. “Next Wednesday? So soon?”

“Yeah, of course we have to go over early to prepare for international competitions.” Ding-*ge* noticed that something was off about his expression. “What’s wrong? Do you have plans?”

Jian Rong swiftly opened the calendar on his phone and glanced at it before he let out an almost imperceptible sigh of relief and shook his head. “No, I don’t.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Lu Boyuan spotted the note written on Jian Rong’s phone calendar. It consisted of merely a few words that he wasn’t able to read clearly due to their small size; he was only certain that the note was for the 6th, or next Tuesday.

By the time Jian Rong locked his phone and looked over, Lu Boyuan had already focused his gaze back on the low-level match being broadcasted in front of them.

The team members had all gone wild on their days off: they could keep their room doors shut for two whole days, and they could cover an entire table with Ace of Spades champagne.

But as soon as their break was over, every person calmed down and holed up in the practice room. Even Lu Boyuan was constantly on the verge of ignoring the doctor’s advice as he repeatedly tested his limits. He would only smile helplessly and turn off his computer once Jian Rong sent him a message and started observing his games.

This lasted until the day before they were set to depart for Korea—in other words, May 6th.

At eight in the morning, Jian Rong quietly opened his bedroom door. He tugged down the hat on his head and tiptoed downstairs, wanting to grab

some cookies and milk for the road. The moment he entered the kitchen, he smelled the aroma of coffee.

When Jian Rong pushed open the door and saw the man fiddling with the coffee machine, his sleepy eyes gradually brightened, though they were also somewhat stunned.

Lu Boyuan was wearing a short-sleeved shirt and long pants, and his hair was still a bit messy. At the noise, he cast a light look over from the corner of his eye and said, “You’re up early.”

Jian Rong snapped out of it. “Mn, I have to go out to take care of something.”

Lu Boyuan had just woken up as well, and his voice was a little raspy. “Where are you going?”

Jian Rong was silent for quite a few seconds before he finally said, “To visit my parents. It’s the anniversary of their death today.”

Lu Boyuan had already guessed as much, so he wasn’t surprised to hear that.

He nodded. “Come drink some coffee, I brewed you a cup. After you finish it, I’ll drive you over.”

Jian Rong subconsciously said, “It’s a three hour round trip there and back. You don’t have to, I called a taxi…”

“I’ll drive you.” Lu Boyuan interrupted him, “I should make a trip to see them.”

Because of his serious illness, Jian Rong’s grandpa couldn’t leave the hospital back when he was still here. After so many years, this was the first time someone was accompanying Jian Rong to pay respects.

On the way there, Lu Boyuan pulled the car over to the side of the road and parked before he got out and bought a bundle of white lilies.

Jian Rong sat in the passenger seat, holding the heady and fragrant flowers. His nose twitched, and he couldn’t help but glance at Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan held the steering wheel with one hand. He asked him lazily, “What is it.”

“Nothing.” Jian Rong withdrew his gaze and said softly, “I’ve never bought them flowers before.”

Lu Boyuan gave an “*en*.” “I’ll buy it for them from now on.”

Caught off guard, Jian Rong replied with an indistinct “*okay*” before he turned his head to look out the window.

The perfect amount of sunlight was out today. It pierced through the window and landed in the depths of Jian Rong’s eyes, reflecting an expanse of brightness.

Although Jian Rong didn’t buy flowers, he did purchase offerings from outside.

At the grave, he silently laid out the offerings. Then, he greeted, “Mom, Dad.”

Every time Jian Rong came to pay his respects, he was very quiet and hardly ever said anything. But today, he hesitated briefly before continuing, “I brought someone with me today…”

The bundle of white lilies was placed in front of the tombstone. Lu Boyuan gave a simple bow and introduced himself even more seriously than he ever did when he was on stage in front of a worldwide audience. “Hello, Uncle and Auntie. My name is Lu Boyuan, and I’m Jian Rong’s boyfriend.”

Jian Rong was in the middle of pouring rice wine for his dad. Upon hearing that, his hand tilted to the side, and he spilled a little bit of alcohol.

Lu Boyuan took the bottle of rice wine from him and steadily filled the cup to the brim.

The tombstone was cleaned periodically, so all they had to do was wipe down the tombstone once; it didn’t take much effort.

Jian Rong sat on the ground and stared at the photos on the tombstone for a long time before he stood up and said, “Let’s go back.”

It was getting quite late in the morning, which was enough torment in and of itself.

Moreover, Jian Rong believed that he didn’t have to rely entirely on a tombstone to maintain his relationship with his parents. If he kept the people he missed inside of his heart, they would exist there forever.

They still had a lot of time left after they returned to the car, so they held a quick discussion and decided to check in on Little Orange on their way back.

Now that winter had passed, Little Orange didn't need to remain in the animal clinic every day anymore. In the first place, stray cats simply refused to stay put for very long.

The animal clinic employee told them that Little Orange had just dropped by half an hour earlier to mooch off some food and water, and that they should look for the cat nearby.

By the time Jian Rong found Little Orange, that guy was scuffling with another stray cat, taking advantage of the fat that he had gained from eating and drinking well the entire winter.

An orange cat and a white cat writhed around on the ground, tangled inextricably together in a fight. A few harsh yowls occasionally drifted out as well.

Lu Boyuan lifted his eyebrow. He was about to approach and rescue their son when Jian Rong grabbed his arm and stopped him.

Jian Rong said, "Let them fight."

The words "*if you can't beat this white cat then you don't need to eat this can of food I'm holding*" seemed to be written across his face.

Lu Boyuan said, amused, "What if he gets hurt?"

“He’s a stray anyway.” Jian Rong said, “If he doesn’t win this time, he’ll always be bullied by this damn white cat from now on.”

As Lu Boyuan looked at those two brawling cats, his mind suddenly substituted them out for two humans, and he couldn’t help but avert his face to let out a soft huff of laughter.

Jian Rong frowned. “What’s so funny?”

“Nothing.” Resisting the urge to laugh, Lu Boyuan said lightly to the orange cat, “Baby, you got this.”

“…”

Not long after, the white cat fled in defeat, leaving behind Little Orange and a bunch of cat fur scattered across the floor.

Little Orange licked his fur in satisfaction. Then, he walked over to Lu Boyuan, rubbed his tail vigorously against his legs, and strolled around him in a circle before he finally raised his head and meowed half-heartedly at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong: “…”

Jian Rong directly picked him up by the scruff of his neck and said, “You’re so fat that I can’t even lift you up anymore.”

“Meow!”

“That little white cat is only half your size, yet it still took you so long to beat it. How shameful is that, hah?”

“Meow meow!!!”

“Try hissing at me one more time, and I won’t let you eat canned food ever again this year.”

Little Orange stared at him for a while before he shifted his gaze to peer at Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan had crouched down as well. One hand was propped up on his knee, and there was a smile in his eyes underneath the brim of his hat. “Don’t look at me, he’s the one in charge.”

Jian Rong’s pulse quickened a little. He felt Little Orange turn to face him again before he butted his head into Jian Rong’s palm.

Jian Rong: “…grow up.”

Ding-*ge* called them right after they finished feeding Little Orange, urging them to return for a practice match.

Lu Boyuan drove back to the base, parked, and turned off the car. As Jian Rong was unbuckling his seatbelt, he spotted some cat fur stuck to Lu Boyuan’s arm.

When Jian Rong reached out and brushed it off, Lu Boyuan released the steering wheel and latched onto his hand, dragging him a bit closer.

Practice was too exhausting lately, so Jian Rong hadn’t gone back to Lu Boyuan’s room. They had almost no alone time together.

They kissed quietly in the car for several minutes. It wasn't particularly passionate; they were just like two cats that had been placed into separate cages for a few days, and they rubbed against each other now, marking their scent on the other.

The next day, TTC got in their coach bus and departed for Korea.

"The competition is only two weeks long." Ding-*ge* stared at Xiao Bai's luggage in bewilderment. "Why are you bringing two suitcases?!"

"I brought a lot of sauce to mix into my food." Xiao Bai asked the person sitting in a row ahead of him, "Qian-*ge*, how come your phone keeps going off?"

"*Ai*, it's my wife. She and her girlfriends want me to help buy some things for them. Since the moment I woke up, the messages haven't stopped pouring in…" Yuan Qian paused before he glanced behind him and negotiated, "Since you're bringing two suitcases, can I borrow one to put stuff in on our way back?"

"No problem." Xiao Bai lowered his head and browsed through Weibo. As he was scrolling, he came across an advertisement that his *ge* had just posted an hour ago.

He slid past it absent-mindedly. All of a sudden, he furrowed his brows and scrolled back up—

Lu Boyuan had changed the profile picture that he had been using ever since the creation of his Weibo account.

His new profile picture was of an orange cat being lifted by the scruff of its neck. The hand holding it up was thin and slender, and if you enlarged the photo, you could see a small tuft of blue hair belonging to the hand's owner enter the shot.

Lu Boyuan's intentions couldn't have been any more obvious or prideful. He might as well have written out in his personal bio: "*Hello everyone this is the Weibo account for TTC Soft's boyfriend*."

Xiao Bai abruptly remembered how back when Yuan Qian and Youyou had switched to matching couple profile pictures, Youyou's comment section had been flamed so horribly that she was forced to turn off her comments on Weibo for a very long time. It had only gotten a bit better in the past few years.

There were already over 4,000 comments underneath Lu Boyuan's new advertisement post. Usually, this kind of post wouldn't even reach a thousand comments.

Xiao Bai originally thought the comment section was going to be a sea of insults, but much to his surprise—

[This cat is so slender… I mean, this cat is so fat.]

[That tuft of blue cat fur isn't too bad.]

[Road, can you help me ask this dumbass bluecat[2] why he isn't streaming?]

[Click on the profile picture to see the location of TTC's mid laner and jungler's date!]

[Hehehe MSI is right around the corner and you two still run out to go on a date, how disgusting. You're going to this year's MSI for nothing.]

[Mhm OP this dumbass is right, pro players should sit in front of their computers 24 hours a day and not go anywhere else. A date? Oh please, it's wrong to even fart, okay!]

Xiao Bai exited out of the comment section. The number of comments refreshed: there were already 5,000 now.

Xiao Bai couldn't help but glance over to the right, where their team's mid laner and jungler were sitting shoulder to shoulder, watching a match recording together. He retracted his gaze and peeked at Pine, who was in the seat next to him.

Pine was wearing earphones in one ear. Without lifting his head, he said, "What is it?"

"P-baby." Xiao Bai leaned in towards him and proposed quietly, "Should we also switch to matching profile pictures?"

Pine paused and turned to look at him.

Xiao Bai: "Look at my *ge*. His comments on Weibo immediately skyrocketed after he changed his profile picture. What financier daddy could resist that?"

Pine lowered his gaze and faced away from him. "No."

"Why not?"

“If I change it, how am I supposed to find a partner?”

“Find…” Xiao Bai trailed off and blinked a few times. “You want to find a partner now?”

Pine didn’t answer him.

Xiao Bai clicked his tongue and sat back in his seat as he thought, *Fine, don’t change it then*.

He gazed at the headrest in front of him for a while before he turned his head again. “Why do you want to find a partner all of a sudden? Has someone caught your eye? Who? Tell me, I can help you go after…”

Pine said, “You can’t help.”

Xiao Bai stared at Pine’s downcast eyelashes for several seconds. Then, he let out an “*oh*” and silently shifted back into his original position.

The instant Jian Rong got out of the car at the airport, he saw fans holding signs with their team name or team members’ IDs printed on them.

When the fans spotted TTC, they suppressed their screams and called out the members’ names softly. The fans were extremely organized and maintained a small distance from the team.

The other members’ fans were all saying things like “*ahhh God Lu*,” “*Pine look at me look at me*,” *“Xiao Bai you got skinnier again*,” and “*Qian good luck at the competition*.”

As for Jian Rong’s fans—

“Dumbass, you better play well.”

“If you really can’t beat them, it’s okay. Whatever you do, don’t get into a fight. You’re in a foreign country, so you should just admit defeat.”

Upon hearing that, the other team members and their fans kept snickering and laughing.

“Son, take care of yourself overseas. If you have nothing better to do, you can stream—it can be that kind of daily lifestyle stream. Your dads will keep you company and chat with you.”

It really did freaking seem like they were seeing their son off at the airport.

Jian Rong stopped in place with a glower on his face. He turned his head and asked, “It’s a weekday… do none of you have work or school?”

“We do.” The male fan at the front clicked his tongue. “This is just because all the other members’ fans said that they had to send you guys off at the airport. We thought about it and decided that we couldn’t let you lose too much face, so we came to shout some things for the heck of it. We’ll leave after we see you go through security.”

Jian Rong: “…”

The male fan said: “How about you sign an autograph for the heck of it too? That way, I can let my brothers on Tieba know that you departed smoothly.”

"…" Jian Rong swallowed down his profanity and sucked in a deep breath. "Pen."

The male fan handed him a pen. Out of the corner of his eye, the fan saw Xiao Bai scribble out a very long line of text in an autograph, filled with phrases like "*to my babies*," "*thank you*," and "*love you all*."

The male fan pondered briefly and said, "Sign an autograph like Bye's. To whoever whoever, and then write something."

"Write what?"

"Anything." The fan contemplated for a moment. "Whatever you want to say to the friends in SoftBar, it can just be a few words."

Jian Rong scrawled out something on the sign. After that, he handed back the pen, put on his mask, and turned around to go through the security check.

The fans who had gathered from SoftBar warmly called out "*goodbye, dumbass*." Then they flipped over the sign to look at the autograph—

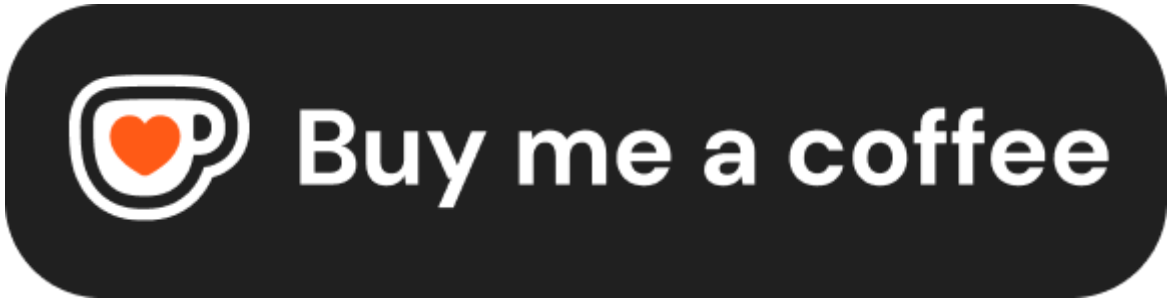
[To SoftBar's netizens: Mind your own business, I'm your dad—Soft]

Translation Notes

1. *I will be going off of the old MSI format (2019 and earlier), since JZB probably did as well, considering that there was no MSI held the year ICDI was written. (MSI's format changed in 2021)* ^

2. *Play on words with 'bluenette' (蓝毛 vs 蓝猫) – both are pronounced 'mao', but one is referring to fur/hair and the other is referring to a cat* ^

Yan: JZB's limited autograph for the ICDI physical book release is in fact... Soft's autograph :^)



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ICDI Chapter 121: I really should learn from TTC in all respects!

This was Jian Rong's first time traveling abroad. The flight from Shanghai to Seoul was a mere two hours long, and he only truly felt like he was in a foreign country once he got off the plane and heard the people around him speaking in a language that he couldn't understand.

This time, Jian Rong brought a backpack and a suitcase with him. The primary purpose of the backpack was to carry his and Lu Boyuan's keyboards, because he was worried that they would break if they were placed in the suitcase and subjected to rough handling.

At that moment, he was pushing along two suitcases with his backpack hooked over his shoulders, giving him quite the travel-worn appearance.

A few steps later, someone kneaded the back of his neck. Lu Boyuan had napped for a while on the plane, so his voice was a bit deep. "I'll carry it."

Jian Rong refused. "No need, it's not heavy."

But Lu Boyuan didn't listen to him. He curled his fingers around the backpack strap and lifted it up with one hand. "Take it off."

Jian Rong was afraid that he would hurt his hand if he held the backpack up like that for a long time. He hesitated briefly before he ended up shrugging the backpack off and handing it to Lu Boyuan.

After they went through customs, they were met by a representative who enthusiastically guided the team to the bus.

Since the competition was drawing closer, almost all of them had practiced until three AM last night before going to sleep. They had just napped for two hours on the plane and were even more listless now, so everyone knocked out the moment they got on the bus.

Everyone except for Jian Rong. Even though he had seemed calm and collected on the journey over, this was his first time traveling internationally; inevitably, he was still a little excited.

Right as Lu Boyuan's head drooped down, someone nudged his shoulder gently.

Jian Rong sat up very straight as he tugged his mask down and said, "It's not comfortable to sleep with your head hanging forward like that."

"Mn?" The tail end of the syllable lilted upwards, filled with a bit of exhaustion.

Jian Rong said, "You can sleep on my shoulder."

Lu Boyuan glanced at his thin shoulder and lifted an eyebrow.

That gesture offended Jian Rong, and he immediately narrowed his eyes. "You…"

He swallowed the rest of his sentence back down as Lu Boyuan shifted lower in his seat and rested his head unhesitatingly against Jian Rong's shoulder.

Jian Rong was wearing a shirt made out of a very comfortable material, and his shoulder wasn't as delicate as it appeared either. The aroma of milk-scented shower gel clung to him.

They were sitting in the last row. As Jian Rong heard Lu Boyuan's breathing even out, he carefully pulled out his phone to find a video to watch.

But as soon as he opened the video app, he felt the person on his shoulder nestle a little closer to his neck. The man tilted his head upwards a bit, causing his steady, slightly heavy breathing to land solidly against Jian Rong's neck.

The skin there swiftly started tingling, and Jian Rong's video-searching fingers froze in midair.

A few seconds later, Lu Boyuan tilted his head to the side and pressed a kiss to his neck.

The man's lips were somewhat dry, and when he spoke, his voice sounded quite lazy. "You'll get dizzy watching videos in the car. If you want to watch, do it after we get to the hotel."

Both of Jian Rong's legs were spread wide apart like he was some powerful old master. Upon hearing that, he reached up and tugged the brim of his hat down before he stuffed his phone back into his pocket. With a red face, he said in the same tone as usual, "Got it… don't talk anymore."

The corners of Lu Boyuan's mouth curled up, and he replied vaguely, "Mn."

Although they had arrived fairly early, the competition organizers had still considerately set up their rooms for them in advance.

The hotel wasn't small: each member received their own hotel room with a king-size bed. They brought the substitute jungler Moon with them this time, and he got his own room too. There was a buffet in the hotel, and they had even specially hired Chinese chefs; the practice rooms belonging to the various professional leagues' teams were located on the third floor.

The conditions were so good that everyone began suspecting that Fu-*ge* had secretly bribed the competition officials.

After they got to the hotel and split up the rooms, they spent the afternoon catching up on more sleep. It was night when they finally met up with each other in the hotel restaurant like normal people.

In order to ensure the health of the pro players, the dishes were all relatively mild. Ding-*ge* wasn't too particular about his own food since he didn't need to compete, so he picked up the chili sauce that Xiao Bai had brought and poured a generous amount into his food. He prattled on, "I'll take you guys to look at the practice room after we're done eating. I just went to check it out earlier, the computers are very high-quality, and there's no problem with the internet either. This time, the Korean organizers finally have a bit of a conscience."

Jian Rong drank a mouthful of soup. "Isn't that all stuff the organizers should've provided in the first place?"

During last year's Worlds in Shanghai, the organizers had treated the pro players from other competitive regions very well.

"Bullshit." Xiao Bai grew indignant at the mere mention of this topic. "When we came to compete in Korea several years ago, the internet was so laggy that we couldn't even play the game. We were forced to go to an internet cafe, and it took them quite a few days to fix it! The living conditions weren't great either. I weighed myself after we got back and found that I had lost three freaking kilograms!"

Jian Rong: "Then why didn't you stay there a bit longer."

Xiao Bai: "…is that something a human would say?"

After that short exchange, he returned to a clear-headed state.

Once they were done with dinner, Ding-*ge* brought them to the third-floor practice room.

Ding-*ge* said in the elevator, "Since we came pretty early, the other teams aren't here yet, and it's a little difficult to schedule practice matches. I contacted PUD, Fighting Tiger, and a few Korean teams, but they're all on their post-competition breaks, so I'm not sure they're free. I'll do what I can. For tonight, just play ranked."

The assistant coach said, "Maybe we should try reaching out to HT?"

Ding-*ge* shook his head without even considering it. "We don't have the kind of relationship with them where we can peacefully play in a practice

match together… also, HT never schedules practice matches with teams from other competitive regions."

Jian Rong sneered coldly, "Who cares."

"Honestly." Xiao Bai stretched. "They make it seem like people actually want to practice with them."

Their allotted practice room was indeed fairly nice. Every team's room was separated, and the soundproofing was excellent. Though the computers weren't as good as their equipment back at the base, it was sufficient enough.

Jian Rong played a few ranked games. He was currently rank three on the Korean server; second place reportedly belonged to a booster studio's account, and above that was Master.

The higher the tier, the fewer actors he encountered. At this point, all the people in his tier were somewhat well-known, and they didn't want to stir up trouble for themselves over something like this.

He was about to start the next game when Ding-*ge* pushed open the door and entered the room. He said that PUD happened to be free right at that moment for a practice match.

Xiao Bai glanced at the clock. "Isn't it almost midnight in China? Are they not resting?"

Ding-*ge* said, "They have group training in a few days to prepare for the summer season, so they're all back at the base now. They've had enough

fun, and they just happen to have time for a few games."

Jian Rong didn't say anything as he shifted his mouse and joined the custom lobby.

PUD's entire team was present, including XIU, who had returned from his injury. Back during the spring season, TTC and PUD didn't have many practice matches with each other, because both sides were afraid of revealing their strategies. Now that the season was over, they could schedule matches with each other again.

Since all of PUD's starters were playing, there was actually some back and forth in the practice matches that night. Both sides won two out of four games, with the shortest lasting twenty-two minutes and the longest lasting fifty-two.

After the four matches concluded, both sides unanimously agreed to stop there for the night.

But the team members weren't in any rush to leave the lobby—

[PUD, XIU: So freaking mad, if my waist hadn't acted up that day, we would be the ones in Korea today T-T]

[TTC · Road: Don't stay up too late.]

[PUD, 98k: Qian]

[PUD, 98k: Their top laner is a support-style player just like you, so don't be afraid]

[TTC · Qian: …who's a support-style player? Am I not the world's number one Irelia?]

[PUD, 98k: The number one Irelia? Solo?]

[TTC · Qian: Come at me!!]

The two top laners simultaneously left the lobby.

Xiao Bai and PUD's support, Dundun, roasted their ADCs earlier trash plays together in the chat. While they were doing so, they also trampled over HT's support.

Jian Rong was chewing gum to keep up his energy. His cursor wavered around a few times before he finally moved it to Savior's avatar picture and privately messaged him.

[TTC · Soft: 1]

[PUD, Savior: Here~]

Jian Rong rested his hands on his keyboard. A long moment passed before he finally typed: [Have you ever laned against Master before?]

[PUD, Savior: I have, back when I was still in the LCK. A few games, didn't win]

[PUD, Savior: Have you not? Your ranks are very close.]

Strictly speaking, he had laned against Master one time.

Approximately a year and a half ago, Jian Rong had crashed cars with Master on the Korean server. Master had solo killed him once, and adding on the fact that Jian Rong's teammates weren't of any help, they had surrendered that game after twenty minutes.

Later on, Jian Rong stopped really playing on the Korean server for the sake of streaming. Even though he had recently returned, he hadn't crashed cars with Master yet.

When Jian Rong didn't respond, Savior sent some more messages.

[PUD, Savior: He's very strong. You have to be careful not to be solo killed in lane]

[PUD, Savior: He's super good at creating lane pressure. When I play against him, I don't dare to last hit]

[TTC · Soft: You dare to when you're playing against me?]

[PUD, Savior: ...T-T]

[PUD, Savior: In short, good luck, I hope the LPL can win T-T]

Those four practice matches were comparable to the spring season finals, and they felt physically and emotionally drained afterwards. Once the practice matches were over, half of the practice room immediately cleared out.

Jian Rong solo queued with his headphones on, all the way until he was only one LP away from surpassing rank two on the Korean server. He let out

a long exhale and leaned back in his chair, removing his headphones. He glanced down at the time: it was 4:30 in the morning.

The seats next to him were empty. Sensing the hollowness in his stomach, Jian Rong rubbed his belly and stood up as he messaged Lu Boyuan. He wanted Lu Boyuan to wake him up the next day when he was going down for lunch.

Right as he started typing, someone gently grasped his arm.

Jian Rong jumped with fright and whipped his head around—

Lu Boyuan had moved over an executive chair from who knows where and was sitting behind Jian Rong the entire time. He had already mussed up his own bangs, and it looked like he had just woken up.

Lu Boyuan looked up at him. “Done?”

Jian Rong was stunned. “Didn’t… you go back to your room to sleep?”

“No, I was watching you play.”

Jian Rong’s hand was a little chilly, but Lu Boyuan didn’t really mind as he gripped it and stood up. “Come to my room first.”

We still have practice tomorrow.

Jian Rong held back and refrained from saying that. In Korea, it was still a tad cold in May, so Jian Rong carelessly slipped on his sweatshirt and hat before they left the practice room side by side.

Unexpectedly, the lights were still on in the Japanese team's nearby practice room. At that moment, a short pro player wearing a team uniform just happened to walk out of the room.

He evidently recognized them, and he began bowing and greeting Lu Boyuan, who nodded in response. Then, Lu Boyuan led Jian Rong into the elevator, still holding his hand.

Lu Boyuan's room was very casually messy. His suitcase was open on the floor, his hat and tablet were tossed onto the couch, and two pairs of clean socks were lying on the carpet.

Lu Boyuan took off Jian Rong's hat and asked, "I'll make some instant noodles for you, what flavor do you want?"

Jian Rong paused and furrowed his brows. "Noodles?"

"Mn." Lu Boyuan said, "I asked a staff member to run to the store to buy some."

Jian Rong blinked. "You sat behind me for that long, just so you could make me a cup of instant noodles?"

Lu Boyuan went quiet for a second. "Not entirely."

At first, he was worried that Jian Rong would practice for too long, and he also wanted to go upstairs together with his boyfriend.

Then, he saw Jian Rong open up a search engine after everyone else was gone—

"*Master spring season best plays montage*"

"*When do HT's pro players play ranked?*"

"*What time of the day can you snipe Master in ranked?*"

Only then did Lu Boyuan remember that this was Jian Rong's first time competing in an international tournament, and that this was also his first time playing against Master in an official setting.

Rather than feeling nervous, Jian Rong more so wanted to win.

In their profession, there weren't really any shortcuts to take. If they wanted to win, they had to practice. Your strength never lied; your performance in the competition directly reflected how powerful you were.

As a result, Lu Boyuan hadn't interrupted his practice.

Lu Boyuan rubbed Jian Rong's stomach through his clothing. "So? What flavor do you want?"

Jian Rong shook his head. "It's okay, I sleep better when I'm hungry."

Lu Boyuan reached under his shirt and pressed his warm palm against his belly. He asked, amused, "Really not gonna eat?"

"…"

In the end, the instant noodles were opened.

The sun was about to come up by the time he was done eating. Jian Rong went back to his room and showered before he peacefully fell asleep with a

full stomach.

After a few days of practice in Korea, the other teams finally started arriving one after another. At the beginning, the professional leagues were willing to schedule some practice matches with each other, but as MSI approached, less and less teams wanted to do so—in the first place, everyone was just trying to figure out where they stood among the other teams. They weren't really hoping to glean something from the practice matches. What's more, all the teams had a lot of interviews to attend to, so none of their free periods aligned.

In the blink of an eye, it was the day before the start of MSI.

On that day, a picture caused quite a stir in the esports circle.

The instigator was a certain pro player from Japan, who posted a photo on social media with the caption: [Inspired by Road and Soft _(\'-\'_) even the strong players are working this hard, so I also should double my efforts!]

The picture was of Lu Boyuan and Jian Rong, and it was a shot of them from behind, taken the night they arrived in Korea.

It was originally a very ordinary caption, but unfortunately, modern-day netizens were all Sherlock Holmes.

They scrutinized the photo using the magnifying glasses passed down from their ancestors. Then, they discovered that not only were these two walking shoulder to shoulder, even their hands were laced together under the cover of their sleeves!!

That was whatever, but when a netizen commented "*hhh they seem to be holding hands*" underneath this pro player's post, he responded with—

[Really? No wonder I saw Soft come out of Road's room on my way back… ahh… ≡ (˙-˙) it looks like their team members truly are very close. I really should learn from TTC in all respects!]

When Ding-*ge* read that reply out loud in the practice room, everyone glanced at Jian Rong with a weird expression in their eyes.

Jian Rong: "…I only went in to eat a bowl of instant noodles."

With "*like hell I believe you*" written across his face, Xiao Bai nodded. "It must've been an extremely exhausting meal."

"……"

Jian Rong reached out and hit the "F" key on Xiao Bai's keyboard.

Xiao Bai, who was forced to flash into the midst of the opposing team: "Hey what the fuck—what the fuck! What the fuck!!!"

"It's fine if we were seen, nothing happened anyway." Lu Boyuan was in the middle of eating an enemy monster. "What team are we up against tomorrow?"

Only six teams competed in MSI's main event. The group stage consisted of single matches in a double round robin format. Since each team had to play two BO1 matches with every other team, the four teams with the highest total accumulated points would advance to the semifinals.

MSI's competition schedule was very tightly packed. Every team had two matches per day, and the group stage finished within five days.

"We're playing against Turkey and North America tomorrow." Ding-*ge* took out his notebook. "North America's second seed from last year is participating this time. They won't be a huge problem, just don't let their jungler and support roam around all over the place…"

Ding-*ge* had already completely written off the couple as a lost cause. The online public opinion concerning the hand-holding incident wasn't particularly bad either. On the contrary, the two of them had even been solidly praised for practicing until five AM.

Originally, Ding-*ge* was planning to ignore it and let it calm down on its own in a few days. But he would've never expected for this incident to ultimately end up becoming a fuse.

That night, HT's ADC Rish posted on his social media side account—[I found the reason why the LPL is so weak. Their players are all dating, so of course they can only rely on the LCK's players to compete ^^]

Because it was his side account, not many people saw it, and the post didn't give rise to a lot of waves at first. The comments underneath all consisted of a bunch of people who were also mocking the LPL.

Out of over two hundred comments, only a few were relatively clear-headed. They expressed arguments like "*even if TTC's mid laner and jungler truly are dating, it hasn't affected their performance*"; "*HT are the real slackers, aren't they? I heard the top laner went on vacation after the spring*

season and just returned recently"; "*you should focus on practicing, are you not afraid of losing to TTC in a few days*." But those remarks were quickly drowned out by the rest of the ridicule.

However, the majority of people were precisely capable of unearthing the opinions they wanted to see the least among hundreds of other comments.

At three AM the day MSI was set to kick off, Rish appeared on social media again and posted a question—[Lose to TTC? Do you mean losing like this? [gif]]

The gif was clipped from one of TTC's matches against HT during last year's S10 semifinals. In the image, HT stood outside of TTC's fountain, spawn camping[1] them.

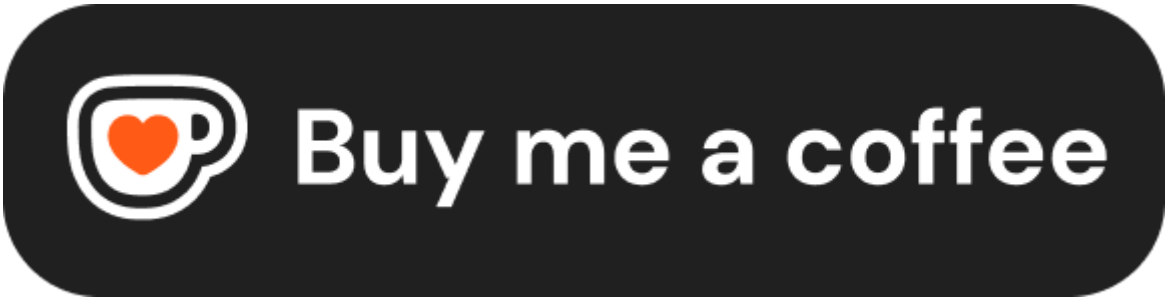
The relationship between both professional leagues was already strained to begin with, and Rish's tanky engage essentially set off the explosion.

Over the course of one night, China's pro players stormed into Rish's social media account and started unleashing their insults. Both leagues' netizens were locked in fierce arguments with each other, and from that point on, the curtain of an interregional war was lifted—

Translation Notes

1. *I didn't know what this was in Chinese back when I first started translating ICDI, so I'll go back and fix it, but essentially HT spawn camped TTC really bad in the last game of the semifinals. (Spawn*

camping is when you stand next to the respawn point and kill players over and over as they respawn. It's kinda toxic/BM.) ^



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ICDI Chapter 122: A dog barking because of its master’s power.

Thank you very much to Vera for the Ko-fi!

In the first place, TTC being spawn camped last year was a sore spot for Chinese LoL players. Now that someone had brought it up once again, everyone became extremely agitated, and they hated the fact that they couldn’t reach through the screen to grab Rish’s dog head.

Since it was late at night, not many celebrities bought topics on the hot search around this time. On top of that, this was the hour when gamers were the most active, so the incident quickly occupied quite a few spots on the hot search—

「Rish posts gif mocking TTC」 There was a vomiting emoji at the end of this topic.

「The online translator is so laggy」

「Master liked Rish’s gif」

「HT humiliates the LPL collectively」

The gamers used a translation website to convert everything they wanted to say into Korean and stayed up all night, waging a 300-round war against the Korean flamers.

[Only three of TTC's starters were playing in that game. If all their starters were present, wouldn't they knock out your teeth? Who the hell are you trying to mock here?]

[Korean netizen: A loss is a loss, it doesn't matter who was playing. Is the LPL a sore loser?]

[A sore loser? What, did the competition organizers decide not to give you the trophy because they thought you guys were too despicable? Or did the LPL go back on their word and force you to participate in a rematch after losing? Do you not have a single damn idea how little this trophy is worth?]

[Korean netizen: In any case, HT was still the winner. If just posting a gif is enough to strike a nerve, then you all must have felt so sad when you lost the match.]

[We did feel pretty sad. It's one thing to play against a bunch of dumbasses, but there was also a disgusting person matchfixing from inside the team. Truly fucking unlucky.]

[Hey, if your champion team is so amazing, why did they still come over here to stream and make money? Isn't your league supposed to be the esports powerhouse? Do you not have money to invite your champion team to go stream?]

[Allegedly, it was also an exclusive contract. Once they signed it, they couldn't stream in Korea anymore. You all can't even get your own world champion to stay? What an impoverished professional league.]

[All the other Korean teams and pro players are pretty good, so why is your HT the only team that insists on being so full of themselves.]

[Korean netizen: You're the ones who spent money to invite HT over, what are you even arguing about now?]

[Yeah, that's right, our league has the money to do so, and we like getting dumbasses to send themselves right to us so we can curse them out. Do you have any other questions I can help answer?]

The result of an entire night of fighting was—

[Korean netizen: How do you report a Chinese person for using a VPN?]

At the crack of dawn, the capitalists began a new day of business, and the hot search topics related to HT were almost completely pushed down. Only two hashtags remained.

One was 「Rish posts gif mocking TTC」, while the other one was—

「Why is Soft still not awake」

The top trending post in this topic was: [#Why is Soft still not awake#, dammit I'm already tired from flaming, isn't this Soft's job? Can't he wake up soon and get to work??]

Of course Soft was awake.

As a matter of fact, when this flame war first erupted, Jian Rong hadn't gone to sleep yet. He was just so tired that he had almost closed his eyes in the

shower, and he had collapsed immediately on the bed afterwards. He didn't even have the energy to reply to his texts, let alone browse through Weibo.

Today at noon, right as he arrived at the practice room with Lu Boyuan, he heard Xiao Bai's insults float out from inside the half-shut door.

Although Xiao Bai would also curse out strangers from time to time through the barrier of his computer screen, this was still the first time he sounded so stirred up about something. There were also quite a few phrases sprinkled throughout his swearing that had evidently escaped only because of how furious he was.

When Jian Rong pushed open the door, Xiao Bai instantly shut up, and everyone in the practice room looked at them in unison.

Chewing on his milk straw, Jian Rong stopped in place. "Whatcha looking at?"

Lu Boyuan sat down in front of his computer and turned it on before he reached out and turned Jian Rong's computer on as well. Then he made the most of the ten seconds it took for the computer to turn on and closed his eyes to nap.

Upon seeing Jian Rong's reaction, Xiao Bai blinked and pursed his lips. Finally, he asked, "Have you not checked Weibo?"

At that moment, Jian Rong swiftly recalled all the times he and Lu Boyuan had been in contact with each other these past few days.

Practice was too exhausting lately. It went late into the night too, so he hadn't gone back to Lu Boyuan's room.

They had shared several quick kisses in the practice room before when everyone else was gone, but the privacy of the practice room was fairly decent. There was no way someone could've seen them with the door closed.

After making a round through his memory, Jian Rong unfurrowed his brows. He carelessly pulled out his gaming chair and sat down lazily in it. "I haven't, what's up?"

Xiao Bai shot Ding-*ge* a look; he didn't know if he was allowed to tell Jian Rong or not.

Ding-*ge* leaned against the long table placed behind the computers, arms crossed, with an unpleasant expression on his face.

If Jian Rong found out about this, he definitely wouldn't be able to hold back—never mind Jian Rong, even Ding-*ge* himself had almost risen to the bait.

Rish's post was being shared all across Weibo right now, so it was impossible to conceal it for long. Ding-*ge* drew in a few deep breaths before he gave a simple explanation of the incident.

The instant he finished talking, a burst of noise came from outside the door.

Everyone in TTC was used to their lifestyle back at the base, where they didn't have a habit of completely closing the door. As a result, all they had

to do was turn around to see what was happening outside.

In the hallway, a staff member was in the middle of leading HT's members to their practice room—HT's headquarters were located elsewhere, so they also had to stay in the same hotel as the other leagues' pro players for the duration of MSI.

At the front of the line was HT's mid laner, Master, a tall guy with a long face. Both of his hands were stuffed in his pockets, and he passed by without a single sideways glance.

The top laner and jungler followed after him, quietly discussing something together.

HT's bot lane was at the very end.

Rish could be considered a newcomer. He wasn't very old, and he sported a partial perm, along with a face covered in pimples. His eyes were so small that they could almost be overlooked entirely, and when he smiled, they narrowed directly into thin lines—

He was walking side by side with HT's support. After he saw the letters "TTC" pasted to the cracked open door, he promptly peered inside the room.

And met Jian Rong's eyes.

At first, Rish looked taken aback, but he quickly recovered. As he passed by the entrance to TTC's practice room, he provocatively whistled a few times.

In that second, Jian Rong had already pummeled Rish 3,000 times in his head.

His morning grumpiness didn't allow him to tolerate dumbasses. With an "*either Rish dies today or HT is getting team wiped*" expression on his face, Jian Rong shot up from his chair—

This sudden movement of his gave everyone else a scare.

Ding-*ge*: "Calm down…"

Xiao Bai: "Murder is a crime…"

Before Jian Rong could go anywhere, someone picked him up by the waist and carried him back to his original spot.

He was seething with rage, so when both of his feet left the ground without warning, he momentarily wasn't able to adjust his expression.

Lu Boyuan placed him back down in his chair and said, "What are you trying to do?"

Jian Rong: "Solo."

"You're a pro player," Lu Boyuan said mildly. "This hotel isn't your solo battleground."

Jian Rong stared at him silently for several seconds, still wearing an extremely dark expression.

A beat passed, and he averted his eyes. Then, he swiveled his chair back around to face his computer and clicked on the LoL game client.

Lu Boyuan ruffled Jian Rong's hair before he turned his head and asked, "What time are we going to the arena this afternoon."

The assistant coach immediately regained his composure. "We have to get there before two. We're the first match, the opening fight, so we'll have to leave in half an hour… Jian Rong, maybe you shouldn't be starting a game? Just in case you can't finish…"

"I can finish it." Jian Rong expressionlessly chose Talon. "It'll be over within twenty minutes."

Half an hour later, TTC punctually boarded the coach bus that would be taking them to the arena.

"Fuck!" Xiao Bai's curse suddenly rang out through the quiet bus. "This dumbass Rish freaking posted on Instagram again!!"

Yuan Qian frowned. "Hasn't he had enough yet?"

Pine opened his eyes. "What did he say."

Ding-*ge* said hastily, "We're about to compete and you're still on your phone?! Stop looking at it, what is there to see…"

"Read it out loud." Lu Boyuan said.

Ding-*ge*: "…"

“He said…” Xiao Bai paused briefly but read it aloud anyway. “‘The color blue is such an eyesore, though it’ll look really nice staying in the fountain.’”

Yuan Qian: “Dumbass.”

Pine: “Indeed.”

Ding-*ge* couldn’t stand it any longer and pulled out his phone. “I’m gonna ask the LCK right now if their league doesn’t control their pro players at all…”

Lu Boyuan: “No need.”

Lu Boyuan glanced at the person sitting next to him who was currently blowing bubbles with his gum, eyes narrowed. Unexpectedly, Lu Boyuan let out a soft laugh and said, “If they won’t take care of it, someone else will inevitably do it for them instead.”

MSI’s opening match soon kicked off. The first game consisted of TTC playing against Turkey’s LK3.

After a simple opening ceremony, the ten pro players each took their seats.

Even though this was only a group stage game, the domestic viewership for today’s match was extremely high because of the interregional war that had erupted earlier that morning, as well as the fact that none of TTC’s members had posted on their social media in almost a week.

Before the match began, all sorts of things were already flying across the barrage—

[Soft is awake, but Soft has become a coward.]

[Fucking bullshit! Even if everyone else in this entire world was a coward, my son would never freaking become one!!!]

[Maybe he's already privately fought Rish over ten times.]

[Stop fantasizing, we would've heard about it by now if something really did happen… though it feels pretty bad, turning a blind eye to it is how the LPL's teams have conventionally handled this sort of thing. After all, they can't let their pro players be penalized while an international tournament is taking place.]

[What? Even this isn't enough for him to start flaming? Has the dumbass been subdued by his career and capitalism?]

[They were the ones being spawn camped in the first place, what's so bad about lying down and taking the mockery? It's true that the LPL is trash.]

[To the above comment: Your bait worked, but you lost your dignity instead. Was it worth it?]

[Now I'm just worried that this incident will affect TTC's performance… they really can't lose this international tournament, or else it'll be so damn shameful.]

[Me too. After that gif came out, who the hell could resist not being provoked…]

Actually, the water friends were right to be concerned. TTC had indeed been affected.

Rish's gif essentially added a ten-stack enrage buff to each member. Every single lane played especially fiercely today—to the point where Turkey and North America's teams started suspecting that they had somehow offended the people on this team.

Over the course of the games, the pro players from both teams unwittingly shared the same doubts—

Is this my jungle or Road's?!

Isn't TTC's top laner supposed to be a support-style player? Why is he playing Irelia and Fiora?!

The bot lane duo tower diving at level 3 without their jungler, is this really happening?!

As well as—*TTC's mid laner is absolutely crazy!!!*

For the two matches, Jian Rong pulled out LeBlanc and Zoe respectively.

During the laning phase, he was either killing someone or on his way to kill someone.

Peaceful laning? It didn't exist. Once you're in the lane, we have to fight; it'll be my loss if I go back to base earlier than you.

It was so ruthless that the enemy jungler couldn't put up with it any longer and had to come gank. But then, it turned out that Road was always one step behind this blasted mid laner.

Each match lasted for less than twenty-five minutes. TTC's group stage was off to a good start, as they simply and beautifully seized two consecutive victories.

Needless to say, today's MVP was given to the killing-frenzied Jian Rong.

Backstage, Lu Boyuan reached up and straightened Jian Rong's collar for him. "Go ahead."

Jian Rong let out an "*en*" and turned around, only to come face-to-face with Ding-*ge*.

At first, he thought that Ding-*ge* was going to warn him to watch his words, just like usual—even though he didn't normally listen to him either.

Unexpectedly, Ding-*ge* merely patted him on the shoulder. "Don't take too long, everyone's hungry. Let's hurry up and go back so we can eat."

Since Korea was the hosting country, a Korean anchor was naturally in charge of the interview as well; they had also provided a translator on hand.

The anchor began with a few standard questions related to today's matches, which Jian Rong answered concisely.

Soon after, the anchor asked, "Which team does Soft look forward to playing against the most?"

Jian Rong said, “HT.”

The anchor chuckled. His smile seemed to contain a tiny bit of arrogance and satisfaction, and he nodded. “Is it because HT is very strong?”

Jian Rong scoffed. “No.”

The anchor was startled. Right as he was about to continue his line of questioning, Jian Rong spoke again.

“I’ve just heard that there’s a member of HT who’s pretty trash on his own and relies on his teammates to carry him in games. However, he’s extremely good at barking once he’s off-stage… in other words, he’s the so-called dog that barks because of its master’s power… to tell the truth, I haven’t ever really seen this kind of dog before. That’s why I want to take advantage of this opportunity to properly meet him.”

The translator was Chinese. He pressed his lips together and restrained his laughter as he turned to translate what Jian Rong said for the anchor. In addition, he gave a detailed explanation of what *“a dog barking because of its master’s power”*[1] meant.

The anchor was completely dumbfounded for five whole seconds.

Then, he said with a strained smile on his face, “Soft is really great at making jokes. In that case, do you currently have any strategies for facing HT?”

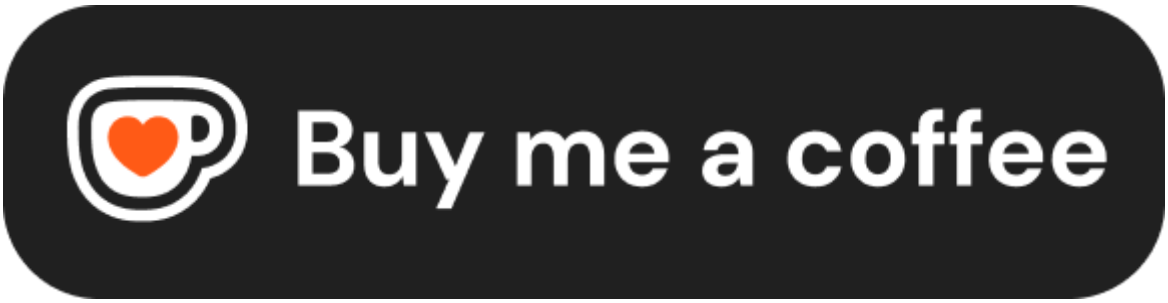
“Of course.” Jian Rong laughed. “They all say that you have to find out who a dog’s master is before you hit it… so I’ll take care of his master first, and

we'll see how long he can keep barking."

Translation Notes

1. *Someone who bullies/threatens others because they have someone powerful backing them* ^

Yan: master... Master... B) #my son is never a coward#



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ICDI Chapter 123: I've already forgotten what you looked like sitting in the fountain four years ago.

Almost exactly as the translator finished repeating Jian Rong's words, the Korean audience members began expressing their dissatisfaction. Interspersed throughout were cheers from Chinese spectators who had come to specifically support TTC.

Luckily, there were only group stage matches today, so not many Chinese fans were there. Otherwise, with this attitude in the audience, it'd be hard to believe if a few fights didn't break out on the spot.

Jian Rong continued to stand up very straight. When the anchor was rendered speechless, Jian Rong even turned his head and raised an eyebrow at him, as if he was asking "*no more questions?*".

It wasn't just the audience who reacted strongly; the break rooms backstage were also quite lively.

In HT's break room.

After listening to the translation, Rish opened his mouth to let out a curse. Unfortunately, right as he started saying "*ah fu—*", their top laner shot him a cold look. Out of respect for his seniors, Rish subconsciously shut up, and several seconds passed before he retrospectively realized that there was a camera in front of them.

Although no one had ever explicitly outlined it, there was an unspoken hierarchy in most Korean teams. The veteran members considered newer

members to be their juniors.

Rish was just promoted from the second team not too long ago, so he only had the guts to go wild in front of other people. In the team, as long as his seniors seemed the slightest bit unhappy, he didn't dare to utter a single word.

The top laner leaned back against the couch and curled his lip. "Ah, isn't the LPL being a bit impolite?"

"Well, birds of a feather flock together." The jungler remembered something and sneered. "The newcomer that we once eliminated from our team, didn't he join a small team in the LPL? I heard that after he joined the team, everyone in it began listening to his commands, even the management."

Rish said promptly, "Yes, that's right, *hyung*[1]. That's exactly what the LPL is like. They don't have a lot of their own pro players, or else why would they be coming to our league every year to scout people?"

There was a *pop*.

Master cracked open a can of coffee and stood up from the couch. Everyone else instantly went silent.

"Where are you going?" the coach called out to him.

"To look for someone, don't follow me." With that, Master strode away.

Meanwhile, in TTC's break room.

Xiao Bai's emotions kept rising and falling with each sentence Jian Rong spoke, and he couldn't help but mutter, "Badass.

"Damn.

"Fuck?!"

In the end, he couldn't resist jumping to his feet and exclaiming, "Is he allowed to say that?!"

Yuan Qian was also stunned by Jian Rong's speech. Briefly taken aback, he finally said, "Forget it… this is a routine procedure by now. I already prepared myself mentally before he even went on stage."

"I did too!" Xiao Bai said, "But isn't this going way too freaking overboard! We still have to play two BO1 matches against HT for the group stage. With this out there, if we lose one of the games we might as well directly pack up and go live in a crack in the ground!"

Pine said calmly, "Then we just have to win every match through the finals."

"?" Xiao Bai froze, and he peered down at him.

Pine recalled the gif that showed him being spawn camped, and the fury and powerlessness he felt leaving the stadium last year came rushing back.

"I've never thought about losing." He stuffed both hands in his pockets and lounged back on the couch. "Everything he said was also what I wanted to say."

Startled, Xiao Bai seemed to remember something. A moment later, he quietly sat back down on the sofa.

Ding-*ge* had prepared himself for the worst-case scenario long before Jian Rong went to do his interview. Once the interview wrapped up on TV, he waved his hand. “That’s enough. Gather your things, let’s get ready to go back and practice.”

As Yuan Qian unzipped his equipment bag, he suddenly noticed something. “How come Captain’s been in the bathroom for so long?”

Following the conclusion of the match, Lu Boyuan hadn’t returned to the break room with them.

Xiao Bai sighed. “Who said my *ge* went to the bathroom?”

Lu Boyuan’s phone had already exploded.

Jian Rong had just thrown a bomb into a nationwide stream. Other people had no way of personally expressing their admiration to him, so they could only seek out his boyfriend instead.

He didn’t actually receive that many private messages, but the pro player group chat had blown up. The group chat that was typically used solely for the sake of scheduling practice matches currently had 99+ unread messages.

Lu Boyuan leaned against the wall next to the backstage entrance, the brim of his hat pulled so low that his face was almost completely hidden. Although they were in Korea right now, he still attracted a fair amount of

attention from the staff. Every person snuck a glance at him as they passed by, and some even approached him to ask for his signature.

While he was scrolling through his unread messages, someone said carelessly from behind him, "*Hyung*."

It was said in Korean.

Lu Boyuan replied to XIU's text first before he leisurely turned his head.

Master stood behind him, holding a can of coffee. He followed the angle Lu Boyuan was facing and glanced outside the door: it was precisely the direction leading to the interview stage.

"I heard about you and Soft. So it's actually true?" Master lifted an eyebrow. "*Hyung*, are you really about to retire? Dating a teammate?"

Even in the LCK, there probably weren't many pro players who Master would call "*hyung*." That was all the more true for the LPL. Since the day Master started competing, he had only ever spoken to one LPL pro player of his own accord, and that was Lu Boyuan.

The year Lu Boyuan won Worlds, he had stepped on Master to come out on top.

Both of them had competed in Worlds for the first time in the same year. One became the champion, and the other finished in the top eight.

Later on, Master gradually developed and became HT's core. Lu Boyuan remained at the peak, and TTC was still a team that forced their opponents

to ban three jungle champions in a row.

There was another secret that very few people knew about—Lu Boyuan was the LPL's only pro player who had ever received an invitation to play for an LCK team. And the team who had invited him was none other than HT.

Back then, the rules concerning import players had just been announced. The domestic esports scene lagged considerably behind the LCK, and though Lu Boyuan received a high salary for their competitive region, it would be considered hardly anything nowadays. HT had also offered him an even higher pay at the time.

However, Lu Boyuan had refused very bluntly, which was why nothing about this incident was ever leaked.

Lu Boyuan swept a look at Master and replied in accurate, fluent Korean, "This isn't any of your business."

Master took a sip of coffee. "But *hyung*, your preferences are quite strange. Do you like someone who's so impolite?"

"There's no need to be polite to some people." Lu Boyuan raised his eyebrow. "Such as you, and those brats on your team."

Master scoffed. "*Hyung*, at the very least I'm calling you *hyung*. You don't need to put it like that, do you? It's truly such a shame that *hyung* wasn't in the fountain last year."

Lu Boyuan's expression didn't change. He said, "Is that so? What a pity, I've already forgotten what you looked like sitting in the fountain four years

ago.”

Jian Rong returned backstage just in time to see Master clench his teeth and glare angrily at Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan turned and saw Jian Rong walking towards them with a glower on his face. He seemed even more ready to fight than he had earlier during the interview.

Lifting a brow, Lu Boyuan reached out to try and grab his hand, but Jian Rong walked straight in between him and Master, separating them with his slight build.

Upon seeing a junior, Master subconsciously restrained his emotions. Face unreadable, he opened his mouth to say something.

Jian Rong spoke before he could.

“…*&¥#% *xiba*[2]! …#%”

Lu Boyuan: “…”

Master: “?”

Jian Rong: “&#… *gaojiao*[3]!”

This outburst of nonsensical Korean caught the other two people off guard.

Lu Boyuan recovered first. He ducked his head and let out a muffled chuckle.

From start to finish, Master only understood two phrases.

And not a single damn one was something nice.

When he saw Lu Boyuan laugh, he quickly snapped out of it and said with a dark expression, “What did he say? Is he cursing at me?”

A “*Master*” came from behind them. Lu Boyuan glanced in that direction and said, “Alright, someone from your team is looking for you. Hurry up and get out of here, let’s not talk to each other outside of matches from now on.”

Master was filled with anger, but at the same time, he couldn’t exactly vent it out in front of a junior member of his team. He shot a glare at Jian Rong and turned around.

Once he was gone, Jian Rong’s bristling fur slowly flattened back down, and he peered behind him. After seeing the look on Lu Boyuan’s face, he frowned and asked, “What’s so funny?”

“Nothing.” Lu Boyuan paused. “Who taught you those phrases of… Korean?”

“Savior. He told me that those were all ways to curse someone out in Korean.” Jian Rong hesitated briefly. “…did I say them wrong?”

Lu Boyuan held back a smile. “No.”

Ding-*ge* called to let them know that the rest of the team was already on the bus, and he urged Lu Boyuan and Jian Rong to head over to the parking lot.

On the way to the bus, Jian Rong still couldn't resist asking, "What were you two talking about earlier? Did that dumbass insult you?"

Lu Boyuan gave Jian Rong a short rundown of their conversation.

Jian Rong: "Four years ago, the fountain?"

"I was young back then, and it was my first time playing in Worlds. I was too arrogant." Lu Boyuan laughed. "During the playoffs, I trapped him in the fountain and bullied him for a while."

No wonder Master brought up Lu Boyuan every single time he expressed some opinion targeting the LPL.

Jian Rong nodded. "So that's why he's held a grudge against the LPL for four years."

Lu Boyuan couldn't help but laugh. "...it shouldn't be entirely because of me. Also, after the match, Ding-*ge* brought us over to apologize."

When they got back to the bus, the others happened to be discussing that match from four years ago as well.

Xiao Bai: "Okay, so let them spawn camp. If you lose, then stand there and take the beating, they can camp as much as they want. But what's the point of mocking us all the time with this after the match is over? And making a gif out of it too? Who the hell hasn't won a match before... this won't do. I'm gonna go find the video of us camping Master four years ago and post it on the internet as a gif!"

The assistant coach: “Ah… that’s not very appropriate, is it? Wasn’t Rish the one stirring up trouble?”

Yuan Qian shook his head. “*You’re too naive*” was written across his face. “Without Master’s brainwashing and consent, would Rish dare to act so wildly? Would he dare to cause trouble for his team?”

“That’s enough.” Lu Boyuan interrupted him evenly. “Don’t do something that you yourself would also find disdainful.”

In reality, Xiao Bai wasn’t really planning on doing anything; he was just fiddling with his phone and working off his anger.

“I knew it… my entire Weibo homepage is filled with clips from Jian Rong’s interview.” He sighed, moved. “This group stage interview is being treated like a finals interview.”

Jian Rong was aware that his last few remarks from the interview had placed the team in the spotlight again.

Even though he had tried his hardest to convey his opinions from his own standpoint, as a member of TTC, everything he did and said in the competitive field undeniably dragged in the club and his teammates.

He propped his cheek up against his hand. As Ding-*ge* passed by their row, Jian Rong called out to him.

Ding-*ge* stopped, supporting himself on the back of a seat. “What is it?”

“The things I said in the interview,” Jian Rong paused for a second. “Will I be penalized for it?”

Ding-*ge* hiked up an eyebrow, somewhat surprised. “Why would you be penalized?”

Jian Rong: “I insulted Rish and called him a dog.”

Lu Boyuan almost burst out laughing.

Ding-*ge* was also startled. A long moment passed before he said, “To tell the truth, what you said was indeed a bit humiliating… for a dog.”

Jian Rong: “…”

Ding-*ge* said firmly, “Someone from the LPL called me just now and said that an official interview team is already on their way to Korea. They’re going to follow us all the way through MSI—this means that the LPL doesn’t think that there’s anything wrong with what you said. If the LPL isn’t even gonna do anything, why would I penalize you?

“Oh, right, Fu-*ge* also sent me a text saying that he’s going to increase the team’s competition budget. With that amount of money, it’s like he wants me to buy the LCK while I’m at it—of course, that’s a bit of an exaggeration, but clearly the team’s owner is extremely pleased with your interview.

“The antis have noticeably decreased on Weibo, and esports fans with profile pictures of other LPL teams are also flaming people for us. So in the eyes of the masses, there’s nothing wrong with your interview either—though naturally that might change if we lose the competition.” Ding-*ge*

paused. “But didn’t we all come to Korea this time with our minds made up to win?”

“That’s for sure!” Yuan Qian picked up where Ding-*ge* left off. “Man, I rewatched the interview a few more times just now, it feels so freaking good! Recently, it’s all been news of HT ridiculing the LPL. It’s finally our turn to mess with them for once!”

Pine asked mildly, “Why didn’t you insult them some more before leaving?”

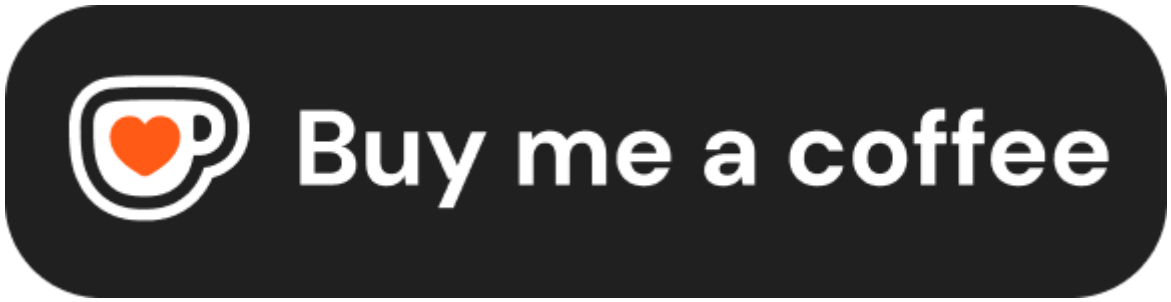
“…the anchor stopped asking me questions.” Jian Rong’s voice was emotionless. “They even turned off my microphone.”

Uproarious laughter instantly exploded through the bus.

The bus stopped in front of the hotel entrance. Ding-*ge* picked up his backpack and calmed down his laughter. “Alright, let’s get back to practice. Thanks to Jian Rong, all the other teams have actively asked to schedule practice matches with us today, so our schedule is already packed for tonight… our first BO1 match against HT takes place tomorrow. Everyone, let’s put in the work and get first blood from HT!”

Translation Notes

1. *Using hyung here instead of ge because they’re talking in Korean* ^
2. *Xiba = ssibal = fuck. I’m just gonna leave it in pinyin cuz we all know Jian Rong isn’t pronouncing anything right anyways* ^
3. *Gaojiao = kkeojyeo = get lost* ^



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ICDI Chapter 124: Group stage match, first win.

The assistant delivered dinner to the practice room, and they ate there.

Although they had just won two BO1 matches today, there wasn't much of a celebratory atmosphere in the practice room. Everyone stared attentively at the game on their computer monitor, and even Xiao Bai didn't secretly slack off to eat snacks.

Lu Boyuan practiced until his wrist felt somewhat sore. With his previous experience, he knew that meant he needed to rest for a while.

He AFKed in the lobby and turned to glance at Jian Rong's game. The chat in the bottom left corner of the screen was in the middle of an argument.

It was true that this started off as a dispute between their team and HT, but in the middle, some unidentified creatures who wanted to watch the show and fan the flames too joined in on the fun. At last, the players from both regions completely shed any and all pretense of friendliness.

Xiao Bai was also observing the flame war going on in Jian Rong's game. On the enemy team, a Korean player was using especially obscene language that even Xiao Bai couldn't tolerate. "You're still not gonna fire back?"

Jian Rong said, "There's nothing really to fire back, it's not like he can understand."

"Use English! A translator!"

“The things I want to say can’t be conveyed in English.” Jian Rong solo killed the opposing mid laner and pressed “B” to recall to base. “Also, these dumbasses are all keeping their eye on me right now… I’ll be banned the moment I let out a single insult.”

Xiao Bai: “Damn, so you’re just gonna take it then? These grandsons… I guess I’ll have to play on the Korean server for the next few days.”

Jian Rong sneered, mostly expressionless.

These people didn’t even want their high-ranked accounts anymore; they just wanted to humiliate him until he went back to the Chinese server.

Right now, he was only about a hundred LP away from Master. There was no way he was going to leave.

What’s more, in this game, flaming someone wasn’t actually the best way to screw with their state of mind.

As he pulled out the item “Dark Seal” and stormed back to the mid lane, someone suddenly pinched his ear.

“Want me to make you a cup of coffee?” Lu Boyuan traced the edge of his ear.

The murderous look on Jian Rong’s face lightened a little. “…mn.”

Jian Rong hadn’t eaten much at any meal today, maybe because he had been angered quite a bit by Rish. Lu Boyuan knew that Jian Rong was going to practice until the middle of the night. Worried that he was going to get

low blood sugar again, Lu Boyuan opened a drawer and took out a lollipop, which he then unwrapped and held next to Jian Rong's lips.

Jian Rong paused before he tilted his head and stuffed the entire candy into his mouth.

When Lu Boyuan went to the break room next door to make coffee, a sigh came from behind him.

"Do you think they're a little too tense?" Ding-*ge* spoke in a low voice, "Did I put too much pressure on them with what I said today?"

Lu Boyuan didn't bother turning around. He said calmly, "What's the point of competing if there isn't any pressure."

Ding-*ge* was taken aback for a moment before a smile spread across his face. "That's also true. The only thing is—we have an extremely important duty to fulfill at MSI this time."

"During which international competition did we not have an important duty to fulfill?"

As Lu Boyuan picked up the coffee, a ringtone sounded from his pocket. He pulled out his phone and glanced at the caller ID before he started walking out of the room. Upon looking up, he saw that Ding-*ge* was typing away on his phone with a serious expression on his face.

Apart from the team members, Ding-*ge* was the person under the most pressure, since he was the one who had allowed Jian Rong to go on stage. Though it had felt extremely good listening to Jian Rong say the things he

had, if something really did happen in the future, Ding-*ge* was definitely going to bear the brunt of the scolding. Moreover… they still hadn't played against HT yet, but Ding-*ge* was already feeling guilty because he hadn't stopped Jian Rong back then.

Jian Rong was still young. If they lost this time, his trash talk would undoubtedly become a meme that would accompany him until retirement.

However, Ding-*ge* certainly wasn't going to reveal these emotions in front of the younger members. Even with Lu Boyuan, Ding-*ge* was trying hard to keep it together.

As a result, Lu Boyuan lifted his hand and patted Ding-*ge*'s shoulder as he passed him by. His voice was light but unusually resolute. "We will win."

After that, without waiting for Ding-*ge*'s reaction, he answered the call with a "*Mom*" and left the break room.

In the practice room, Xiao Bai finished another duo queue game and stretched lazily. He turned to peer at Jian Rong's screen and furrowed his brows in confusion.

"Didn't your team have a major advantage…" Xiao Bai saw his score. "You have 21 kills and you're still not pushing the base?! And why are your teammates choosing to surrender?"

"I'm not done killing yet."

Right as Jian Rong said that, he cleanly and efficiently crushed the mass-flaming dumbass from earlier to death next to the inhibitor.

All of Jian Rong's teammates were Korean. They wanted to push the enemy's base, but they couldn't defeat the opposing team without Jian Rong there. It just so happened that there were three Chinese people on the other team who weren't willing to surrender and would rather die defending their base. Consequently, that dumbass had no choice but to stay in the game and get thrashed.

This was Xiao Bai's first time seeing something like this occur. He thought to himself, *Just how many freaking times did I escape by the skin of my teeth before this?* "That dumbass hasn't stopped flaming this entire time. Why haven't you muted him yet?"

"Why should I mute him?" Jian Rong parted his lips and shifted the lollipop to the other side of his mouth. "I like watching him rage helplessly."

When Lu Boyuan came back with the aroma of coffee clinging to him, Jian Rong was in the middle of concentratedly killing that dumbass for the sixteenth time.

Bloodthirst was written all over Jian Rong's face, and he sucked on his lollipop like he was smoking a cigar.

A man's hand sunk into his hair. The rough pads of his fingers created a comfortable sensation.

From the corner of his eye, Jian Rong glimpsed something entering the lower right part of his vision. Before he could spare the attention to see what it was, he heard Lu Boyuan ask, "Still not finished yet?"

Jian Rong let out a vague hum. “Almost. The other team said that this dumbass went offline.”

Lu Boyuan nodded and drew back the phone that he had stretched in front of Jian Rong. He said to the screen, “Did you see? He’s doing pretty well… practice has been busy these days, we don’t really have any free time.”

Jian Rong was finally satisfied with his killing spree, and he went to tear down the enemy’s base. “What?”

“It’s nothing,” Lu Boyuan said. “I’m talking to my mom.”

Jian Rong left the post-game lobby and entered the queue again. “Oh.”

A few seconds later, Jian Rong bit through the candy in his mouth with a *crack*.

He whipped around just in time to see Lu Boyuan hang up a video call and slip his phone into his pocket.

Jian Rong was briefly stunned. “You hung up?”

“Mn.” Lu Boyuan explained, “My mom watched the interview… and read some of the comments. She wanted to know how you were doing.”

Jian Rong: “So when you held your phone near me a moment ago…”

Lu Boyuan: “I said that you were busy, but she didn’t believe me and thought I was shielding you. That’s why I let her see for herself.”

Jian Rong: “…”

He reached up and raked a hand through his hair, which he had tousled into a complete mess over the course of playing ranked. His expression transformed from shock to bewilderment.

Actually, Jian Rong's features were still somewhat youthful. If he didn't open his mouth, he looked about the same as other graduating high school students or incoming college freshmen. Of course, he was a bit more handsome than most people.

So when Lu Boyuan saw that look on Jian Rong's face, he couldn't help but lift up Jian Rong's chin with his hand. Since they were surrounded by people, he couldn't really do much; in the end, he could only casually knead Jian Rong's chin a few times to satisfy his craving.

Jian Rong swallowed the fragments of candy. "Just hanging up like that… isn't very appropriate, is it."

Lu Boyuan set the coffee down on the desk and said quietly, "It's fine, she doesn't care about this sort of thing. After the tournament's over, I'll take you to visit her, if you're willing. You don't have to if you don't want to, it's not a big deal."

Jian Rong was a little conflicted inside.

He felt like he should go visit her, but it was also true that he didn't know how to properly handle relationships with elders.

He ended up a bit lost in thought, to the point where he didn't even realize he had matched into a game. Lu Boyuan had to help him click "accept."

“Don’t think about it.” Lu Boyuan rubbed the back of Jian Rong’s neck, as if he was giving him a massage. “Concentrate on playing. After you reach rank one on the Korean server, don’t play on this account anymore. I’m still waiting for you to carry me up the ranks on your side account.”

What the hell?!

Xiao Bai, who was eavesdropping for quite a while nearby, instantly coughed out loud.

It was impossible for him to hide the smirk on his face, and he couldn’t resist turning his head to joke, “*Ge*, so this is your position in the relationship? The freeloader?”

Before Jian Rong could come up with a retort, Lu Boyuan happily replied, “That’s right.”

Jian Rong: “…”

Yuan Qian burst out laughing. Once his laughter subsided, he said, puzzled, “Hey, wait a minute, I just don’t understand people these days. What’s wrong with carrying your boyfriend or girlfriend up the ranks? Who doesn’t want to play games together when you’re dating? Does that automatically make the weaker person the freeloader? It’s not like *laozi* can’t carry… what kind of accepted norm is this?”

Lu Boyuan reopened his game and agreed lazily, “Exactly, God Jian is able to carry me.”

Jian Rong: “……”

“I don’t care about couples duo queuing and climbing together. I’m more disgusted by those people who hire boosters. Is it not fun playing in your own tier?” Xiao Bai clicked his tongue. “And those people who specially seek out backup players to help them climb, they’re also extremely revolting.”

Pine: “Take a look at yourself first before you start talking about other people.”

“What’s wrong with me? I’ve only ever asked you, I never look for backup players!” Xiao Bai paused briefly. “Well, fine, it’s true that I used to seek out a certain blue-haired player, but that person’s dating now, so he doesn’t wanna queue with me anymore.”

Jian Rong: “……get lost.”

The five of them practiced until six in the morning and went to sleep after eating breakfast. When they woke up, it was time for their first match against HT.

Judging from the two teams’ current strength levels, it didn’t actually matter whether they won or lost these two group stage matches. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, they would both be able to enter the knockout stage.

However—

[Don’t lose a single game! TTC, you better crush HT!!!]

[Damn, I've been squatting here for half an hour for this match… the last match was Europe vs Japan, and it felt like I was watching a grandpa beat his grandson. It wasn't compelling at all.]

[I'm here I'm here. May I please ask, is this the finals for this year's MSI?]

[Once upon a time, I had a bluenette dumbass right in front of me who used to stream for thirteen hours a day, but I didn't treasure him back then. It was only after he joined the LPL and started streaming for less than thirteen hours a month that I realized it was too late for regrets. Nothing could possibly be more painful in this mortal life than this. If the heavens could give me a chance to do it over, I have five words I want to say to him—if you lose, swim back.]

[This viewer count? Is this the work of TTC's marketing team? A popularity of over 100 million for a group stage match? Is there an entire freaking water army in this stream?!]

[Living person here, PUD fan.]

[Living person here, Fighting Tiger fan.]

[Living person here… Doufu fan.]

…

[Never mind never mind, for this MSI, we're all TTC passerby fans and Soft limited edition dad fans.]

[Stop spamming!!! The players are taking the stage!!!!]

“Maybe it’s because I exhausted all my nerves yesterday.” Xiao Bai sat down and drank some coffee. “But I’m feeling super calm right now.”

Jian Rong: “It’s just a group stage match, how excited do you want to be?”

“Mn. Thanks to you, we’re about to fight in the Sino-Korean war of the century,” Xiao Bai paused, “Or rather, the first battle.”

Jian Rong: “.”

“Check your peripherals,” Lu Boyuan said mildly. “Don’t talk nonsense, there are people listening.”

The staff member in the back who was in charge of monitoring them: “…”

There weren’t many formalities to be had during the group stage. After they indicated to the referee standing behind them that their equipment was good to go, their computer screens immediately switched to the pick/ban interface.

Both mid laners had deep champion pools, and it was evident that neither coach intended to target the mid lane. It all depended on which team got first pick; the other team would inevitably have to ban LeBlanc.

Since this was Jian Rong’s first time truly playing against Master, it was hard to predict what would happen during the laning phase. Based on the conclusions they had reached from their recent meetings, they decided to focus on the top and mid lanes this game.

TTC's first pick went to Irelia for Yuan Qian. Meanwhile, HT locked in a standard Jhin ADC. As the second round of selections rolled around, before the commentators could start analyzing the situation, a champion's portrait popped up and was instantly locked in!

The live audience was momentarily startled. Then, it erupted in cheers—

"Lucian?" Yuan Qian was astonished. "Is… this Lucian meant for the top lane or mid lane?"

Lu Boyuan swept a look at Master's champion. "Mid lane. Their top laner doesn't know how to play this sort of flashy thing."

Ding-*ge*: "I've seen Master play Lucian in ranked before. I didn't think that he would actually pull out this champion in a match…"

Actually, Lucian was originally an ADC champion, but all the commonly used mid champions in the current meta were weak in lane and tended to scale slowly. As a result, this champion—which was bursty in the early game, had movement skills, and sliced through tanks like vegetables in the early-mid game—was brought into the mid lane to disgust people.

The three LPL commentators also frowned heavily when they saw this Lucian.

As the Korean spectators applauded and shouted behind him, Commentator A spoke. "Lucian… is an extremely troublesome champion who can suppress most mid laners in the early game. This really was an unexpected move."

Commentator B nodded. “But he isn’t too hard to deal with either. Lucian isn’t useful beyond the early-mid game, so as long as TTC drags things out, it’ll be okay. Soft can choose a team fight champion, such as Azir or Orianna. Kassadin’s okay too…”

Right as he said that, TTC’s mid champion lit up.

It was a mask-wearing ninja.

The Master of Shadows—Zed.

“Team fight champion?!” Commentator C almost slapped the table and imitated Jian Rong’s response. “Are you looking down on me, Soft? Maybe if the opponent chickens out and picks a late game champion, I’d consider going late game too. But you’re gonna pull out Lucian? In that case, my apologies—let’s fight.”

Commentator A snapped out of his shock. “Well… it’s not impossible to lane against Lucian with Zed! But Soft still hasn’t locked it in yet, so it’s not guaranteed that he’s going to pick Zed in the end!”

Zed was locked in.

The small number of Chinese fans present cheered loudly—HT’s goading yesterday was too unexpected, and the Chinese fans who wanted to come watch couldn’t get tickets for today’s match. There still wasn’t much support for TTC in the arena.

With the two mid champions solidified, this match was destined to be full of conflict.

Both teams headed to their lanes simultaneously. In the first ten minutes of the game, the camera was almost always on the mid lane—the two people in the mid lane were truly too freaking good at stirring up trouble!

While the top laners were peacefully farming, they were fighting.

While the junglers were killing monsters, they were fighting.

While the bot laners were testing each other out, they were fighting.

Commentator A: "Master dashed over and directly unleashed all his damage! Soft's health is very low—nice, Soft beautifully escaped using his Shadow!"

Commentator B: "While Master's skills are on cooldown from clearing minions, Soft rushed straight to him and used his ult! He landed every skill in his combo!! Master's health is disappearing, can Soft get a solo kill—*ai*, Master flashed and dodged the last skill, so close!"

Commentator C: "They're both driving each other up the wall. They've stopped waveclearing, are they about to start trading again—no! They're gonna fight! They can't hold it back any longer…… again, so close! Both sides are getting a little anxious!!!"

It was only after these two people exchanged several hundred blows back and forth that the commentators abruptly realized what was going on.

Commentator A: "The amount of times these two have fought in lane is almost greater than the total number of mid laner clashes combined from all of yesterday's matches, isn't it?"

Commentator B: “But in terms of losses… neither side has lost anything. There’s been no solo kills, and as for the minions… it doesn’t seem like they’ve missed that many?”

Commentator C: “They’re fighting? It feels more like they’re pummeling my heart.”

The barrage was also confused—

[Do you two think this is fencing? Strike a vital point and then retreat? Are you toying with us?]

[A bunch of fierce plays, only to look up and see 0/0/0.]

[Hang on? Are we looking forward to Soft solo killing Master here?! Which mid laner has been able to solo kill Master in these past few years???]

[Forget if anyone has solo killed Master before. I counted—all the mid laners who’ve laned against Master in recent years have been solo killed by him, both in pro play and in ranked.]

[What a coincidence, the same can be said for my son. Might I ask, which LPL mid laner hasn’t been solo killed by my son before?]

[Fun fact: this is Soft’s first year competing…]

[Damn, don’t tell me a mid laner from the LPL is going to stand up at last?!]

[I’ve always thought that Soft was extremely good at laning, and this match has only further proved that fact to me. Really, this is fucking exhilarating.]

[I wanna watch them lane for ten thousand years…]

Laning for ten thousand years was impossible.

While the two mid laners were locked in a stalemate, fights had already broken out in the other lanes—

At level 3, Lu Boyuan's Graves ganked the top lane. Just by showing up, he forced out a flash from HT's top laner. At level 7, Yuan Qian pulled off an outplay that even he found unbelievable and smashed HT's top laner straight into the ground, accomplishing an extremely spectacular solo kill!

After that, Lu Boyuan invaded the enemy jungle and chased the opposing jungler back home before he headed for the bot lane. He circled around from behind and helped to gang up on HT's bot lane duo, ultimately trading one TTC member for two HT members. A solid foundation was established for TTC's bot lane.

As Master was expressionlessly buying items to continue fighting with Jian Rong, one of his teammates spoke up in their voice chat—

"*Hyung*." The jungler said in a small voice, "We're not going for the drake, right?"

Master finally realized that Pine's Tristana had a 20 CS edge over their ADC, as well as two kills.

Because of the disadvantage in the bot lane, HT couldn't take the initiative at all for the drake team fight.

Master extracted himself from his heated emotions and switched camera viewpoints to check on his teammates—the top laner was being suppressed by Irelia, the jungler was trying his hardest to defend his jungle, and the bot lane was having a difficult time even clearing minions.

He frowned. Suddenly, it dawned on him that they were already in an unfavorable situation.

On the other side, Yuan Qian's voice was full of joy. "Hahahahaha a match without Master feels way too freaking relaxed!!"

During the pick/ban phase earlier.

When Jian Rong saw Lucian's portrait appear, it was true that his initial thoughts were exactly as Commentator C had described—pulling out a laning champion in front of him was indeed equivalent to looking down on him.

If this was his first competitive match, he would've probably instantly made his choice by now. But he had just drawn attention to the team yesterday, so for once, he had a bit of a conscience.

He was about to ask Ding-*ge* what champion to take when Lu Boyuan spoke first.

"Do you want to play Zed?"

Everyone else in the team was caught off guard. Only Ding-*ge* raised an eyebrow and seemed to immediately understand.

Jian Rong: "…Zed?"

Lu Boyuan: "Or Pantheon, Corki, Talon…"

Jian Rong interrupted him. "Zed."

In a calm voice, Lu Boyuan asked him as his captain, "If you play Zed, will you be able to detain Master? I'm not requiring you to solo kill him. All you have to do is make it so that he's unable to pay attention to the other lanes."

Jian Rong directly locked in Zed before he asked, "Looking down on me?"

Lu Boyuan let out a laugh and slotted in Ignite. "No, I don't want to put any pressure on you… keep clashing with him, delay him, and we'll win."

The BO5 match from last year had truly instilled too much confidence in HT.

They forgot that HT was a team that had gradually risen with Master's growth. Later on, HT had switched out their bot lane, and this new bot lane duo didn't have much competition experience at all, nor were they naturally talented like Jian Rong. The team's jungler was tossed around even more thoroughly by Lu Boyuan.

If they were up against another team, perhaps HT's other lanes could've created an advantage. But against a veteran team like TTC and a jungler like Lu Boyuan, who was skilled at creating opportunities for his teammates—in order to win, HT needed to rely on Master's dominance in assisting and team fighting.

Who would've thought that Master—someone who was always steady and unflustered—would take the bait first and pull out an utterly unloved Lucian…

Lu Boyuan hid in the brush and successfully camped the enemy jungler. Without batting an eye, he promptly swept the other jungler away with an explosive burst of damage. "Bot lane, I'm coming to summon the Rift Herald. After the first tower is down, we go for the drake. This game is set; the sooner we finish, the sooner we can eat."

Xiao Bai: "Okey-dokey!"

At sixteen minutes, the first team fight erupted with a flash and a hook from Xiao Bai's Thresh! Yuan Qian instantly flashed and used his ult, slowing the enemy bot lane. Pine's Tristana charged straight into the crowd and started boldly dealing damage! HT's support finally managed to CC Pine, but an even more terrifying damage dealer followed up—Graves leaped down into the pit and immediately began purging the battlefield.

Meanwhile, Master, the champion and reinforcement that HT needed… was currently trapped by Jian Rong in the lane.

Speaking of which, that was also odd as hell: all the way up until the team fight was over, those two glass cannons were actually still in the mid lane trading blows. They both had very low health, but neither died…

At twenty-five minutes, Master created an opportunity and solo killed Pine, who was lost in the jungle. Not one to be outdone, Jian Rong also pummeled Rish into the ground.

With that, both ADCs stopped crossing the river boundary alone. They might as well have changed their IDs to "*don't freaking drag me into your conflict*."

At twenty-seven minutes, TTC successfully caught HT's support, who was in the middle of placing a ward. After finishing him off, they went straight for Baron.

Right away, HT's jungler wanted to steal Baron. He hovered around the pit for quite a while before rushing in, only to be killed by Lu Boyuan.

By now, TTC was at a huge advantage. Calm and composed, they went back to base to stock up. Then, they got the Dragon Soul and unanimously set out for HT's base.

…

—At thirty-two minutes, when HT's base was destroyed, the LCK commentators and audience members were still in a state of shock.

Jian Rong removed his headphones. Even though the stage was quite far from the commentators, he could hear the LPL commentators' enthusiastic shouting.

The MVP for this match went to Lu Boyuan.

Yesterday, the anchor had furiously stirred up trouble during the interview segment. Today, he became a yes-man who didn't even want to voice some of the questions that he was required to ask.

The anchor wore a forced smile. “How did today’s match feel?”

Lu Boyuan: “Very relaxed.”

“…”

The anchor pursed his lips. “Did your team arrange today’s strategy beforehand? A strategy targeting Master? Using Zed to pin him down?”

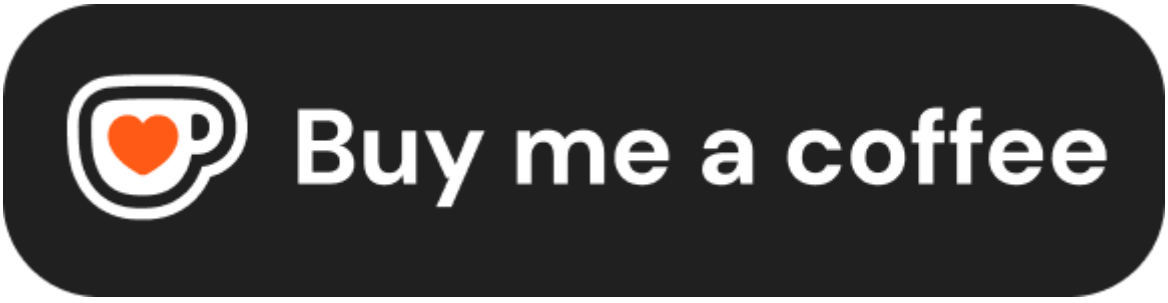
“Of course we’ve looked into various tactics before.” Lu Boyuan paused. “Choosing Zed… pinning him down was one reason. Another reason was that we felt like our mid laner could create an advantage.”

“But he didn’t really have the advantage, both sides were evenly matched…” The anchor trailed off.

Lu Boyuan smiled lazily. “Right.”

By that point, the barrage in the domestic stream was already screaming and roaring with laughter.

Yes, that was right—our LPL’s new mid laner Soft, who had gone pro for less than half a year, was indeed evenly matched with your LCK’s Master, who had been developing for six or seven years now and was considered to be the world’s best mid laner.



ICDI Chapter 125: Chronobreak.

Thank you to Somebody and Kitty for the Ko-fis!

Backstage, on the way to the parking lot, Jian Rong tugged on Lu Boyuan's shirt.

Jian Rong asked quietly, "What did you say in the interview earlier?"

"I…" Lu Boyuan paused. "There wasn't a translator in the break room?"

"Ding-*ge* didn't let the translator tell me." At that, Jian Rong's face immediately darkened. "He said that he was afraid it would inflate my ego."

Lu Boyuan: "He's overthinking things."

Jian Rong was about to say "*exactly*" when Lu Boyuan continued, "Could your ego get any more inflated?"

Jian Rong: "…get lost."

Right as he said that, Lu Boyuan reached out and draped an arm around Jian Rong's neck, drawing him closer to his side. He asked, amused, "You want me to get lost? Not gonna carry me up the ranks anymore?"

The people in front couldn't help but repeatedly glance back at them.

Yuan Qian said enviously, "…I miss my wife."

Xiao Bai: "Disgusting!!!"

“Whatever, let them be.” Ding-*ge* looked very serene. “They can’t even be controlled in China, so who can stop them overseas…”

Apart from that, there was another reason Ding-*ge* was indulging them.

The bus stopped at the hotel, and the two young men who were sitting extremely close, sharing the same pair of earphones, hastily disembarked.

The bus was one of the rare locations where Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan could be close to each other. Once they left the bus, they either had to attend practice or compete in a match. Especially at night, everyone was wiped out after practice; Jian Rong had once flopped straight down onto his bed without even changing clothes or taking a shower.

Since they won the match today, there were many reporters interested in interviewing them. Worried that it would influence the team members’ mentalities, Ding-*ge* hadn’t agreed to any of them. As a result, some uncontrollable reporters went to the hotel entrance to take pictures.

The five members silently got off the bus and returned to the hotel without saying a single word. They headed directly towards the third floor conference room to review the match and didn’t even go back to their rooms beforehand.

The assistant manager ordered pizza for them, which they could just pick up and eat. That way, they could have a meal while reviewing the match without interfering with anything.

Ding-*ge* talked continuously for over an hour at the head of the conference table. Finally, he began wrapping up. “They’re definitely going to revolve

their gameplay around Master tomorrow. Jian Rong, watch out for ganks from the jungler and support as you're laning."

Jian Rong: "Mn."

Xiao Bai lamented weakly, "Didn't we just play against HT today? Why are they back again tomorrow…"

"After tomorrow, we'll only meet them again during the knockout stage… or the finals." Ding-*ge* firmly patted Xiao Bai's slumped back. "Weren't you pretty fired up today when you were flashing and tossing out your hook? How come you've run out of steam now?"

"I haven't." Xiao Bai said, "I'm just a bit tired."

They truly had gone overboard with their training in the past few days.

Ding-*ge* nodded understandingly. "Hang in there for a little longer. Other teams don't even have an opportunity to be this exhausted… is everyone done eating? If so, let's head out and get back to practice."

Before this, Xiao Bai had always thought that something like "*the optimal age for esports*" was very illogical—his *ge* was already in his twenties, but wasn't he still the great demon king of their region?

However, at that moment, Xiao Bai was sprawled back in his gaming chair, exhausted, waiting to be revived. When he turned his head and saw Jian Rong sitting bolt upright, clattering loudly away on his keyboard, looking extremely energetic…

Xiao Bai conceded to his old age.

Was this the vigorous spirit of the youth?

He was quite worried that his *ge* wouldn't be able to handle it.

After winning another game, Jian Rong checked the rankings. He was still about a hundred LP away from Master.

Master had been playing ranked recently as well, but perhaps due to the system's mischief, they both had yet to be matched into the same game.

The higher their rank, the longer the wait time. Five minutes passed in the queue without anything changing, so Jian Rong leaned back in his chair and took out his phone.

He was still very curious as to what Lu Boyuan had said during the interview.

A video of Lu Boyuan's interview showed up on his homepage; he didn't even need to search for it. Jian Rong cautiously pulled out his earphones from his pocket and plugged them in before clicking on the video.

Rough subtitles that a fan had added at the last minute popped up at the bottom of the screen.

Jian Rong had watched this interview live backstage after the competition, but he still found himself a little unable to tear his eyes away as he watched it for the second time.

Their team uniform was centered around comfort. Although the logo design and color choices were quite cool, in the end it was just a simple T-

shirt that was casual and loose. Jian Rong had always thought that this shirt didn't seem much different from a primary school uniform.

But Lu Boyuan was tall and slim, and everything looked good on him. He held one hand behind his back and gripped the microphone with his other hand as he quietly waited for the anchor's questions.

The anchor was dressed impeccably, his hair full of gel. However, he looked almost an entire head shorter standing next to Lu Boyuan.

Lu Boyuan could communicate with the anchor without even needing a translator, which was why Jian Rong couldn't understand the interview.

Jian Rong lowered his head and silently finished watching the video.

After the video ended, Jian Rong was still a little stunned. A beat later, he lifted his hand and rewound the video a bit—he repeated that action approximately ten or so times altogether.

…

Lu Boyuan got up and went to use the restroom after finishing a ranked game.

As he was washing his hands, he splashed some water onto his face. Once he felt a bit more awake, he left the restroom, but on his way back to the practice room, someone grabbed his arm and tugged him into the nearby stairwell.

Lu Boyuan didn't fight it.

The lights in the stairwell turned on because of their footsteps. Lu Boyuan leaned against the wall and gazed down at the person in front of him, a smile playing across his lips. “What’s up?”

Jian Rong looked quietly at him for two seconds before he asked, “You… practiced for so long, your hand doesn’t hurt?”

“I stuck on a pain-relief patch. I’m aware of my situation, I can still carry on.” Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. “You dragged me in here just to ask about this?”

Of course not.

Though Lu Boyuan hadn’t blatantly praised Jian Rong in front of the camera, the underlying meaning was too obvious. Even Jian Rong could understand it.

After watching that interview, Jian Rong grew somewhat restless.

Jian Rong stared at Lu Boyuan’s lips for several seconds before he shifted forward a little.

A moment passed but he still couldn’t come up with an excuse. As a result, he gave up entirely and said, succinctly and tonelessly, “Give me a kiss.”

Lu Boyuan laughed, but what came out of his mouth was: “No can do.”

This was Jian Rong’s first time saying such a thing, and he ended up being rejected. His ears instantly flushed red as he said, flustered, “You freaking… do you still want to be carried or not?”

Lu Boyuan: “There are security cameras in the stairwell.”

Jian Rong immediately went silent.

He sucked in a deep breath and raked a hand through his hair. “Forget it then, let’s go back and practice…”

Lu Boyuan straightened upright. Before Jian Rong could turn around, Lu Boyuan gripped his wrist and pulled him over to the corner, pressing him against the wall.

Not much noise was produced with this movement, and the subpar sound-activated lights swiftly went dark.

Lu Boyuan backed Jian Rong into the corner and said, “This is a blind spot. It won’t show up on camera.”

Jian Rong met Lu Boyuan’s downcast eyes and didn’t respond.

A second later, he tilted his head back and nipped Lu Boyuan’s lips.

Everyone was out of it from practicing so much, and no one noticed that their team’s mid laner and jungler had a bit too long of a bathroom break.

Yuan Qian shot a glance at Jian Rong when he returned.

He felt like he couldn’t turn his head anymore. Right off the bat, he asked, “Xiao Rong, did you not remove all of your makeup from the competition? I think you still have some lipstick on your mouth.”

Jian Rong said stiffly, “…mn.”

At five in the morning, TTC's practice room was still brightly lit.

Xiao Bai was the first to give in. His jacket draped around him, he dragged his broken body back to his room.

Before leaving, he gave Lu Boyuan a profound look.

Lu Boyuan was watching a match recording. He sat in a relaxed manner, as if he could effortlessly pull another three all-nighters in a row.

Pine: "Are you going or not? What are you looking at?"

"Nothing." Xiao Bai walked out of the room, a hand propped against his waist as he sighed, "I'm suddenly getting this feeling that my *ge* should still be able to handle a mere eighteen-year-old teenager just fine."

—

On day three of the group stage, TTC played against HT once again.

Up till now, TTC had won all of their games. HT had only lost one match, and the two teams were respectively ranked first and second for the time being.

After the host finished giving a brief explanation of the process, both teams went on stage to check their equipment. They confirmed their status with the referee, and the game entered the pick/ban phase.

It was obvious that Master had learned his lesson for this match. Right away, he went for his commonly used champion, Zoe. Jian Rong and Ding-

ge shared a quick discussion before Jian Rong picked Syndra, a champion that excelled at laning.

Prior to leaving the stage, Ding-*ge* emphasized, "Just farm if you can't beat him and look for opportunities in the mid-late game. Don't panic if you start to fall behind while laning in the early game. Our team comp is strong, good luck!"

With the team compositions settled, the coaches shook hands and left.

Half a minute later, the game officially began.

HT focused intensely on Lu Boyuan's jungle this time. Soon after the game kicked off, HT's bot lane duo helped their jungler forcefully steal Lu Boyuan's buff. The jungler's goal was also extremely evident—raise up Master, so that his power spike would come even earlier.

Master farmed well. While Jian Rong was back at the base, he went to assist the top lane and successfully killed Yuan Qian while he was there.

Although his buff had been stolen early on, Lu Boyuan was always someone who could haul himself out of a disadvantage. Six minutes in, he stole the drake from HT's jungler and completely cleaned out the lower half of his opponent's jungle.

At twenty minutes, both sides basically had the same amount of gold, and the situation was tense.

Right as the third drake spawned, Jian Rong finally tore an opening in the deadlock—

Jian Rong predicted Rish's positioning and unleashed his skills in his own blind spot, directly oneshotting Rish!

"Beautiful." As Lu Boyuan said that, he sent the enemy jungler and support flying through the air with a flash, E, and Q from his Jarvan. Then, he trapped them securely in his ult.

"I'm here I'm here! Fight! My flash and CC!" Xiao Bai shouted in excitement, "P-baby, charge!"

Without any hesitation, Pine immediately rushed in for the reaping. Yuan Qian also adjusted his positioning in preparation to tank the enemies' damage for Pine—

At that exact moment, the screen went gray.

All ten pro players' screens went gray.

The only thing left was a blue loading bar, along with five words—[The game has been paused.]

Jian Rong furrowed his brows in confusion as the referee's voice came through his headphones. "Do not talk to one another! While a game is paused, team members are prohibited from communicating!"

The referee: "The reason for the pause is because an issue has occurred with Rish's equipment. Everyone, please remain patient, we should be entering the game again shortly."

As a result, Jian Rong had no choice but to sit there and wait.

Five minutes.

Ten minutes.

Twenty minutes—

In the camera, the look on Jian Rong's face grew worse and worse, and he had already made a complete mess of his bangs.

The LPL's commentators were also conversing awkwardly with each other, unanimously puzzled, and question marks covered the barrage—

[What kind of problem requires the game to be paused for so long?!]

[It's been almost half an hour, the players are gonna completely lose their feel for the game!]

[In the middle of a critical team fight, hm? Can that also be paused??]

[Dammit, I was just on my feet shouting 'nice,' and then it freaking fizzled out…]

[Even I've lost all my patience waiting, never mind the players.]

[Soft looks like he's about to pick up his keyboard and throw it at someone.]

[Tsk, I don't know how to describe it, but I have a bad feeling about this…]

The barrage was abuzz with activity. Twenty-three minutes later, the match finally started again, and a countdown appeared on the screen.

But when the players returned to the game, the spectators were rendered even more freaking speechless—

There was no intense team fight taking place in the game. Road's ult wasn't encircling two people, and Rish was still very much alive.

In the stream, Commentator A's voice was low, filled with a bit of reluctance and resentment. He forced himself to smile as he said, "We have received an announcement from the officials. Because of some bugs that appeared in HT Rish's game, the officials have decided to use 'Chronobreak'[1] to rewind the game to eight seconds before the moment the bug showed up.

"Consequently, the solo kill and team fight from earlier have been declared invalid. May we… continue to look forward to how this match will further develop."

The entire audience was in an uproar.

The barrage exploded.

The instant the game resumed, Xiao Bai finally couldn't hold back any longer, and he bellowed in their voice chat, "Fucking pieces of shit!!!"

They had played for so long under pressure and managed to seize a chance at last, only for it to vanish into thin air because of this pause.

"What bug? Shouldn't they freaking clarify the situation for us? Not a single explanation, what's the meaning of this?" Yuan Qian also grew angry. "Just like that, they can pause and restart the game? Are these competition rules established by Koreans?!"

“They didn’t establish the rules.” Pine said coldly, “But they’re the host this time.”

Jian Rong watched as Rish slipped away well in advance. His expression was extremely dark, and he glared at Rish’s character from behind, fuming with rage. “Dumb—ass.”

“Don’t lose your head.” Lu Boyuan’s voice was steady, but it was also filled with emotion. “Place a ward next to the dragon pit. Rish most likely won’t roam around on his own anymore. Qian-*ge*, if you have Teleport, push the wave in the top lane; assess the team fight situation before deciding whether or not to teleport over. Hang in there, we still have opportunities, maintain your feel for the game.”

Everyone had spent the last couple days living in front of their computers. It was impossible for them to lose their feel for the game simply because of a twenty-minute pause.

The biggest blow to TTC was still the loss of the major advantage that they were about to seize; you could even say that they were about to have victory in their hands—

Naturally, they couldn’t compete well when they were bursting with all sorts of negative emotions, including rage and an unwillingness to back down or give in.

Forty-one minutes into the game, HT strenuously destroyed TTC’s Nexus and won this group stage match.

Most of the live audience was screaming and cheering. They didn't seem to care at all how their league's team had just won.

Meanwhile, the domestic stream had already detonated completely.

At that moment, the esports fans, who took great pains to argue pointlessly with each other every single day, stood in unprecedented solidarity.

Ever since the pause began, there weren't many legible comments in the barrage—insults against the competition officials, insults against HT, insults against the LCK… there was everything one could imagine. The barrage was packed all the way up until the match concluded.

Amidst this convoluted barrage, the camera focused on their pro league's team.

It was unclear whether it was done on purpose or not, but the officials gave Jian Rong a big close-up.

On the screen—

The usually unbridled and unrestrained young man sat there, expressionless. His hands were still resting against his keyboard, and he didn't move for a long time.

If you looked closely, you would see that the teenager's eyes were somewhat red. The watery sheen only lasted for a second before he clenched his teeth and forcibly choked it back down…

That camera shot directly demolished all of the LPL fans' defenses.

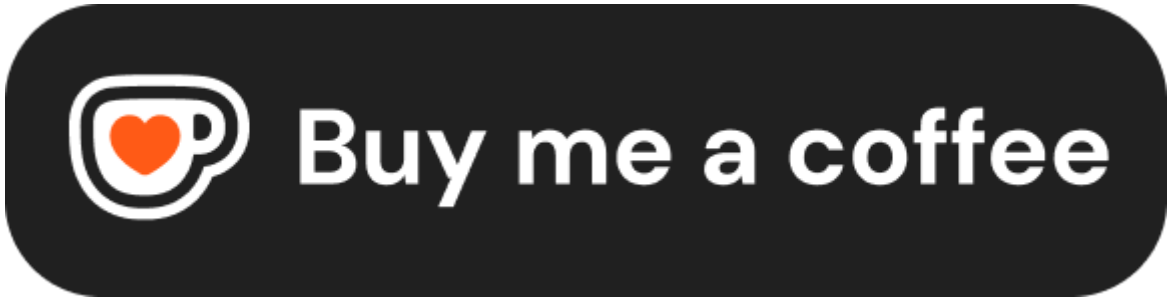
—

The author has something to say:

Chronobreak, or rewinding the clock, is a competition super-tool. It has been used many times before in pro play when the need arises. The novel merely applies the competition rules; it has nothing to do with any team (in real life).

Translation Notes

1. *Chronobreak: a feature that allows officials to rewind the game to a certain point in time to deal with bugs and other issues. Examples in LoL pro play: a recent article, a video example. (The video itself is kind of funny to watch – personal fave is #2, stopping the match for a new chair.)* ^



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ICDI Chapter 126: Isn’t your mid laner a little too freaking arrogant.

Thank you so much to AnaVita for the very generous Ko-fi!

It was already a routine procedure to see the viewer count of TTC’s competition livestreams increase instead of decrease after the conclusion of a match.

However, this time was different. In the past, everyone came to watch TTC’s post-match interview, but this time—

[HT, fuck you.]

[What’s the reason for the redo? What was the bug? Are they not gonna explain? I watched the replay clip ten times and still couldn’t figure out what could’ve possibly allowed Rish to trigger a rewind!]

[*Laozi* is fucking furious!!! My son didn’t even fucking cry when he badmouthed pro players and was flamed by five teams’ fans, or when he said Kan was matchfixing and his stream was demolished, or when he lost to PUD and got on the hot search because a bunch of idiots were shading him and calling him trash!!! Dammit, I’m seething with rage!!!]

[Exactly! He didn’t even cry when he was called the king of the dwarves!!!!]

[Everyone in TTC looks dejected T-T Xiao Bai seems like he’s about to cry too, my heart hurts.]

[They’re gonna cry just because they lost???]

[Are you a dumbass? As if they’re crying because they lost the match? No, they’re fucking crying out of disgust!]

[Road looks unhappy too. The last time I saw him wear this expression was backstage during the previous World Championship semifinals.]

[I can’t take this anymore, Dad is jumping over the firewall to kill a few HT fans and spice things up.]

[Dumbass HT, you won the match but lost your dignity. Was it worth it?]

…

Jian Rong also didn’t expect for himself to be angered to the point of tears.

If he were a balloon, he probably would’ve already exploded midair by now, and the detonated latex could’ve been ejected straight out of the atmosphere.

This was Jian Rong’s first time encountering this sort of situation. Earlier, Yuan Qian had briefly explained Chronobreak to him in the voice chat: this function had actually become quite common in recent years. The last time it occurred was during a match between a North American team and a European team, because the North American support couldn’t use his ult. That kind of major bug definitely required the usage of Chronobreak.

But from the beginning to the end of the game’s pause, the officials hadn’t given TTC’s five members any explanation whatsoever regarding the

Chronobreak. The only thing they said was a simple: “There’s been a bug.”

What kind of bug appeared? What kind of bug could appear?

Rish couldn’t use a skill? Impossible, because Jian Rong had oneshotted Rish in less than two seconds. He had even calculated it—during that time frame, Rish’s flash was still on cooldown, whereas Jian Rong’s was still in his grasp. In other words, no matter what kind of champion ability Rish used at the time, that dumbass still would’ve died.

It wasn’t that Jian Rong was a sore loser. He was merely unwilling to accept this turn of events.

They were about to get their double kill on HT, which would’ve crushed that dumbass Rish to the point where he couldn’t spout any more damn nonsense…

It felt too oppressive, too uncomfortable.

But there was no way he was going to cry in front of HT or the dumbass HT fans in the audience. And there was absolutely no way he was going to cry on stage.

So he forcefully suppressed that tiny hint of reflexive tears until his eyes ached from it.

Lu Boyuan sensed Jian Rong’s current state of mind.

It was normal to feel emotional. No matter how long Jian Rong had lived as a wild child all on his own, right now he was still only a fresh eighteen-year-

old pro player who had just started competing.

Competitive matches were different from streams. Even if everyone believed that this match was unfair, they couldn't immediately grow hostile and start spewing insults on stage. They couldn't even report anything after the game finished.

Lu Boyuan placed his hand on Jian Rong's head. He was about to remind him that they had to shake hands when Jian Rong suddenly shot to his feet.

The young man, whose eyes were red just a moment ago in the lens of the camera, had already returned to normal, though his eyes were still narrowed.

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. He started to withdraw his hand, but Jian Rong directly grabbed it.

Their fingers tangled together as they held hands for a few very short seconds.

Jian Rong released him and wrapped his hand around Lu Boyuan's wrist instead. He said, "I'm fine. Let's go shake hands."

That scene happened to be captured by the camera's deliberate close-up.

The fans, who were in the middle of passionately flaming HT together, all paused—

[This director's camera shots are so fucking…… beautiful!]

[Even though this game pause and Chronobreak were both very fake, Road and Soft are real.]

[I was so pissed that I booked a ticket to Korea for tonight. Fucking hell, without *laozi* there, any kind of pig-dog dares to bully my dumbass son, dammit!]

[:) what a freaking coincidence, I also just bought my plane ticket]

[Originally, I felt like Master still had a bit of pride from being a strong player. Now, he's nothing at all.]

After they shook hands and left the stage, they heard the sound of an argument before they even entered the break room.

Ding-*ge* had already been battling with the competition officials for an hour.

"Fine—fine! Even if *laozi* acknowledges this bullshit vision deficiency bug of yours! There was no ward in the brush that our team member was in! It was impossible for Rish to have noticed that our team member was there! He would've still died! Does this kind of bug affect the results of the team fight?! It isn't sufficient enough to trigger the requirements for a Chronobreak at all! What a shitty referee!" Ding-*ge* propped a hand against his waist. His face was flushed with anger as he said to the translator nearby, "Translate everything I just said to them! I'm demanding a rematch!!!"

Upon seeing the team members return, Ding-*ge* waved at them aggressively. "You guys worked hard and played very well. Grab your

equipment bags and go rest on the bus, I'll be there once I'm done arguing with them!"

Lu Boyuan swept a cool look at the competition representative.

The representative felt a bit guilty because of that glance. He pursed his lips and even prepared himself to be on the receiving end of Road's condemnation.

But Lu Boyuan didn't say anything to him. He merely retracted his gaze and said to Ding-*ge*, "They won't agree to a rematch."

"I know." Relying on the fact that the guy in front of them couldn't understand Chinese, Ding-*ge* said, "I didn't really think that I would be able to convince them to accept a rematch. I just wanted to curse them out… whatever, let's go. I'm not going to waste my time on a bunch of dumbasses."

Today's match truly gave rise to a huge earthquake in the esports circle.

Almost as soon as the match ended, public opinions began exploding through the circle, all across the world.

HT fans first launched their mockery on the internet outside of the Great Firewall—they said that Jian Rong only knew how to talk big, but he was actually incomparably trash; they said that Road had become way weaker after dating someone on the team, and that he was no longer at the peak; they also said that TTC fans were sore losers who flamed just because they lost the match.

But it was obvious that there weren't as many bystanders speaking up on their behalf this time. Many people even made posts asking the officials when they would be releasing an announcement regarding this Chronobreak.

In the hour following the match, the LPL's pro players posted one after another—

[PUDXIU: Too dirty, this is really too dirty. Although it's just a group stage match, I believe that the Korean competition officials need to give an explanation.]

[PUDSavior: It shouldn't be like this~…]

[PUD98k: Waiting for the announcement.]

[MFG-Jm: I'm so pissed!!!]

[Fighting Tiger Da Niu: Who exactly is the sore loser here? They're also a veteran team, so how come they're becoming more unsightly as time goes by?]

[YY Doufu: Piece of trash HT! Piece of trash Rish! During ranked, I already thought that this bastard was utterly garbage. Playing support for him was enough to infuriate *laozi* out of this universe! Who would've thought that he would have the balls to pull this kind of dirty trick in a competition? His head's as big as a damn watermelon, is it full of water from the Han River?]

These statements were brought over the Great Firewall. Soon after, HT fans changed their tune from "TTC is a sore loser" to "the LPL is a sore loser."

But at the height of their ridiculing, the other professional leagues unexpectedly popped up as well.

The first to do so was the top North American team, HOH. The team's mid laner posted a screenshot of a practice match lobby containing HOH and TTC. The caption was: "Every game is extremely enjoyable."

The jungler from the LCK's M7 posted: "Who fell into the Chronobreak?"

And from the Japanese team that they had encountered many times in the hallway outside of their practice room, the little support who had posted the picture of Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan said—"Really such a pity~~ losing the match in such a manner ó﹏ò ~~ but TTC has always been an extremely powerful existence to me (smile). Even though this post may seem very headstrong, I still want to express my thoughts no matter what >_<!"

Even the runner-up from the LCK's Spring Split, LLC, posted "disappointed" and "crying" emojis.

Because of how vocal the pro players were, more people began paying attention to this match.

In the practice room, Yuan Qian locked his phone in satisfaction and lifted his head to ban a champion. "The comment section of HT's official social media account is already a complete mess. Karma's a bitch."

"I still don't get it." Xiao Bai frowned. "It was just a group stage match, and it didn't really matter whether they won or lost. Did HT need to act so disgusting? I was so nauseated that I couldn't even finish my freaking dinner today…"

“They did need to.” Ding-*ge* looked up from his phone. “Someone leaked a piece of information to me. There was a pretty big Korean brand that was in negotiations with HT, and they were apparently about to discuss the contract when HT lost to us in the previous group stage match. The LCK fans were displeased, so that company started to hesitate. I bet… their goal was already set before this match: they had to win.”

Pine: “With the way things currently are, can they still get the endorsement?”

“No, that company has already gotten in touch with the LCK’s spring season runner-up.” Ding-*ge* paused. “Unless HT wins this year’s MSI…”

Jian Rong destroyed the enemy’s Nexus and interrupted coldly, “If they win, I’ll eat Doufu alive.”

The others: “……”

Actual imagery appeared in Xiao Bai’s mind, and he made a face. “That’s not necessary…”

Lu Boyuan stretched his fingers. “When is the official announcement coming out?”

Ding-*ge* shook his head. “Still unclear, but it should be soon. This incident has made a big splash, so they probably have to consider their wording.”

Jian Rong stopped in the game lobby. No matter how he practiced, it didn’t feel right.

His lane opponents were too weak, and they weren't a match for him at all. After laning, he also had to clean up the mess left behind by his slacking teammates…

He contemplated a little before he picked up his phone from the table.

Jian Rong had received many consoling messages tonight, and he had replied to each one with a concise "*thank you*," ending the conversation there.

Now, Jian Rong clumsily pulled up the group message function, which he had never used before. He typed out something and selected all of the LPL mid laners on his friends list as the recipients…

Late at night, Lu Boyuan received a text—

[XIU: Isn't your mid laner a little too freaking arrogant.]

Lu Boyuan cast a quick glance behind him. His boyfriend sat upright in his chair, and he was, as usual, earnestly laning against someone.

[R: What do you mean.]

[XIU: ?]

[XIU: You don't know?]

[XIU: Tonight, your mid laner invited everyone—and by that, I mean the mid laners belonging to the LPL's other fifteen teams—to solo.]

[XIU: Tell me, is that not freaking ridiculous?!]

Lu Boyuan couldn't help but laugh.

It was ridiculous, but it was indeed also something that Jian Rong would do.

[R: And then what? How many people agreed?]

[XIU: At the beginning, they all did. What LPL team would reject you guys right now?]

[XIU: After five hours, the other fourteen mid laners all withdrew.]

[R: The remaining one is…?]

[XIU: Our mid laner.]

[XIU: They've been dueling for an hour. Savior learned some curses from your mid laner's stream, and he's been swearing out loud to himself this entire time…]

[R: Who's won more?]

[XIU: I feel like the outcome isn't important. The main thing is that they're learning from each other and growing. Also, Soft and Savior aren't the same kind of mid laner either, so there's no way to tell who's better or worse, don't you agree?]

Lu Boyuan scoffed. He put down his phone and started the next game.

Jian Rong soloed with Savior all the way until 3:30 in the morning.

In the end, Savior's computer was taken over by some unknown teammate, who also messaged: [We still have practice matches tomorrow, go torment

someone else. While I'm here, let me mention that your boyfriend is pretty good at playing mid too, maybe you can go solo with him instead.]

Jian Rong usually couldn't bear to see Lu Boyuan practice for even one extra hour. Naturally, there was no way he would make Lu Boyuan solo with him.

He bid farewell to Savior before he left the party and created his own lobby with plans to solo queue.

"Wait a moment." A hand covered the back of his hand and moved his mouse so that he left the queue.

Lu Boyuan let go of him and straightened upright. "Lift your hand."

Jian Rong obediently raised his hand as he tilted his head back, puzzled, and asked, "What is it…"

Lu Boyuan tore open the wrapper for an herbal plaster and stuck it on Jian Rong's wrist.

Jian Rong instantly said, "It doesn't hurt."

"It'll be sore tomorrow, so leave it on." Lu Boyuan pressed his palm over the plaster, securing it in place. "Why did you suddenly ask people to solo?"

Jian Rong looked up at Lu Boyuan. After a few seconds of silence, he said, "I want to win."

He didn't merely want to win the competition; he even more so wanted to beat Master.

Since that match, Jian Rong had done some rare self-reflection—if he had just destroyed Master during the laning phase, then it wouldn't have mattered even if that team fight was replayed over and over.

There were quite a few times in lane where he could've solo killed Master.

Since Master was able to narrowly escape every time, it only meant that Jian Rong still wasn't strong enough.

Jian Rong continued to stare at Lu Boyuan. "Right after you first went pro, you could already trap and bully him in the fountain…"

Lu Boyuan smiled. "I didn't tell you this earlier, but Ding-*ge* believes that spawn camping is disrespectful to the opponent. That's why an internal penalty for spawn camping was established a few years ago."

Jian Rong: "I have money."

"…alright then." Lu Boyuan laughed in spite of himself and glanced at Jian Rong's game lobby. "Should I solo with you for a while?"

Jian Rong firmly refused. "No need."

Lu Boyuan said, "I didn't practice much tonight. I watched a lot of match recordings, so I haven't surpassed my practice quota yet."

"That's not it." Jian Rong lowered his head and fixed his gaze on the computer monitor. As he entered matchmaking, he mumbled quietly, "If I solo with you… I won't be able to play."

Xiao Bai: “But giving my *ge* movement boosts and shields during the match seemed to come pretty easily to you.”

Jian Rong: “…”

“I’m absolutely not eavesdropping on purpose, okay,” Xiao Bai immediately clarified. He removed one of his earbuds and made as if he was going to hand it to Jian Rong. “The song just happened to end. Listen if you don’t believe me.”

Jian Rong sucked in a deep breath. “Get lost.”

Lu Boyuan held back his laughter and kneaded Jian Rong’s face before he turned around and returned to his seat to continue practicing.

Xiao Bai pretended to act spoiled. “*Ge*, this poor person has also been playing the entire night, my wrist hurts a bit too…”

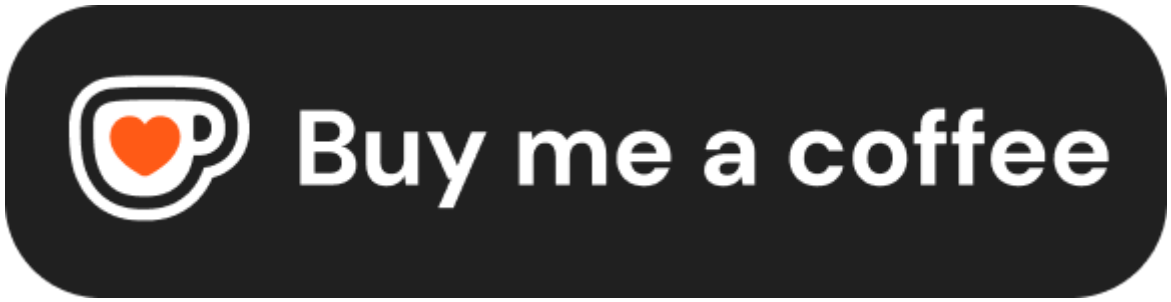
Lu Boyuan tossed an herbal plaster onto his desk.

Xiao Bai: “*Ge*, it’s a bit inconvenient for me, could you help me stick it on…”

Jian Rong asked, “How are you inconvenienced? Is your wrist broken? A youth with a broken arm may have an injured body but is still resolutely determined to play competitively?”

Xiao Bai: “I’m sorry.”

Yan: 8* chapter countdown till the end of the main story begins now ☺ (I got it wrong the first time oops)



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ICDI Chapter 127: Watch gege carry you to victory.

Thanks to Sofia for the Ko-fi!

The official announcement was posted the next day, which was also the last day of the group stage.

They used the same justification that they had provided to Ding-*ge* backstage: Rish's map was lacking vision, and the referee believed that this bug severely affected the progression of the match over the next few seconds. After obtaining the agreement of both teams, the officials used Chronobreak to restore the game to the time 21:18.

Apart from that announcement, there wasn't any further explanation.

This announcement was clearly a bit bare bones. Not only did it fail to calm down the collective fury, it actually exacerbated the situation. At first, Rish had stubbornly refused to delete that spawn camping gif, but because of this incident, a torrent of hostility rained down on him, and Rish deactivated his side account altogether.

But it was no use—

Due to unforeseen circumstances last year, two of TTC's starters had to step down from the match. You decided to hit them while they were down, and in the previous half of the year, you both explicitly and implicitly opened fire on the LPL during your interviews, documentaries, and on your social

media. Now that your team ended up using this kind of cheap trick to win a match, let's just settle our new and old grudges at the same time.

If your side account is gone, then we'll look for your main account or the team's official account. In short, don't think that you're going to get out of this.

The pressure of public opinion was too great. In the span of one night, the Chinese streaming platform and gaming gear brands all expressed that they were going to terminate their contracts with HT. Most of the few Chinese HT fans also deserted them.

HT had already secretly blown up internally. Meanwhile, the other team involved remained completely calm; they continued to practice and compete, and they didn't spare a single glance at the competition officials or HT.

Because their enrage buff had too many stacks, TTC effortlessly won their last two group stage matches. Neither BO1 match took longer than thirty-two minutes to finish.

At this point, the group stage schedule had concluded. The top four teams with the most accumulated points directly entered the semifinals.

After they were done with the group stage, Ding-*ge* bluntly declined the Korean competition organizers' request for a private individual interview, using the excuse "*we were not informed of this ahead of time*." Then, he immediately left with the rest of the team members in tow. There wasn't any room for negotiation with a competition host that lacked a bottom line.

The sky was already dark by the time they got back to the hotel, and they were the only ones in the hotel buffet's dining area.

Ding-*ge* took a sip of his orange juice and said, "Even the interviewers from our own pro league have to get in line, so why do we have to be at their beck and call? They're just using this private interview to bring traffic to their official media accounts. It won't be streamed nationwide, you'd have to be a dumbass to agree to that. And also, aren't these organizers HT's own dad? They should go ask their son to do an interview."

Yuan Qian nodded. "HT really lost more than they gained from this."

"After obtaining the agreement of both teams, the officials used Chronobreak…" Xiao Bai was in the middle of reading the official announcement. Halfway through, he frowned and asked Ding-*ge*, "*Ge*, did you agree?"

"How could I have possibly agreed?! I only approved the pause, and then they hit me with the notification about the Chronobreak later!" Ding-*ge* waved his hand. "Whatever, let's drop the subject. It's ruining my appetite."

Pine leisurely sliced open his steak as he watched the match livestream on his phone. "HT's in a very poor condition today. They've been playing against HOH for forty-seven minutes now, and they have the disadvantage too."

Xiao Bai raised his head. "How long did it take us to play against HOH again?"

Yuan Qian: "A little over thirty minutes, probably."

Lu Boyuan placed a freshly peeled crab leg into Jian Rong's bowl before he glanced at Pine's phone. "There's no such thing as a disadvantage this late in the game. It all comes down to one team fight."

Jian Rong polished off the crab leg. Then he seemed to think of something, and he looked up as he asked, "If HT wins, we'll have the same amount of points as them. Will we need to have a playoff?"

"Not this year." Ding-*ge* set down his chopsticks. "The top two teams, or the teams that are tied for first, won't encounter each other during the semifinals this year. Their respective opponents will be determined based on lots drawn by the teams in third and fourth place."

Yuan Qian was startled. "Even if HT loses this match, they're still ranked second. That means… we can only compete against the third- or fourth-placed team in the semifinals?"

Ding-*ge* nodded. "Correct. Going off of the current point ranking, it should be Japan and Europe."

Jian Rong said lowly, "They're getting off lightly."

Lu Boyuan: "What?"

"Giving them a chance to make it to the finals." Jian Rong repeated coldly, "They're getting off lightly."

Lu Boyuan: "That's not guaranteed. What if they lose to Japan or Europe and fold at the semifinals…"

That possibility instantly caused Jian Rong's expression to darken.

Lu Boyuan restrained his laughter. "Then should I go help you invite them to a 5v5?"

Jian Rong turned to look at him, somewhat perplexed. "How?"

Lu Boyuan smiled. "How do you want to do it? If you want to make a bigger deal out of it, I could directly tag their official Twitter? And say that they're my grandsons if they don't come?"

Jian Rong: "…"

The others burst out laughing.

Only Ding-*ge* couldn't bear to laugh. "What the hell… are you trying to screw with HT or me? Enough, forget other teams, we have to perform well in our own semifinals first. They're drawing lots tomorrow, and the match is the day after that. Work hard these next few days, don't slack off. You guys will get a long vacation after MSI."

The good part about a tightly packed schedule was that pro players and spectators alike could remain immersed in competition mode the entire time.

Not long after the group stage ended, the semifinals followed close on its heels. Through drawing lots, TTC's opponent for the semifinals ended up being Japan's KWY, whereas HT was going to compete against the LEC's M7.

The match between TTC and KWY was scheduled for the first day of the semifinals.

The competition organizers were doing a final equipment inspection, and both teams stood at the backstage entrance, waiting to go on stage.

Jian Rong chewed on his gum, both hands stuffed in his pockets as he listened to Lu Boyuan and Ding-*ge* quietly discuss the pick/ban phase that would be taking place shortly.

Xiao Bai suddenly shuffled over and whispered, "Hey, has the team over there been staring at us?"

Jian Rong furrowed his brows and looked over.

The Japanese team wore cherry blossom pink uniforms.

Five guys wearing pink team uniforms were looking at them as if they were their idols, especially their team's support, who was staring straight at Jian Rong. The support's hair was dyed ash-gray, and his eyes were very large. When he met Jian Rong's gaze, he subconsciously averted his eyes at first, but he turned his head back a few seconds later. Then, he nervously and shyly… waved at Jian Rong.

Jian Rong: "…"

A few seconds later, he raised his hand and gave an extremely stiff wave back.

“KWY’s members all seem to be quite short?” Xiao Bai peered around. “Not a single one is taller than you.”

Jian Rong: “Come with me to the break room over there.”

Xiao Bai: “No way, we’re about to go on stage!”

Jian Rong: “It won’t take that long to beat you up.”

“…”

They were told to go on stage. As the Japanese team’s support passed by them, he summoned up his courage and said something to Jian Rong.

Xiao Bai: “What’d he say?”

Jian Rong shook his head. “Couldn’t understand.”

After KWY’s introduction was finished, it was their turn. Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan walked side by side at the very back of the group.

“*Gege*, please do your best during the match, I will be paying attention to every brilliant play you pull off during the game. I look forward to your guidance today…” Lu Boyuan’s voice floated over at a volume that only the two of them could hear. “That’s what the little support said.”

Jian Rong: “…”

“*Gege* is so popular.” Lu Boyuan smiled as he copied that support and said softly, “I will also be paying attention to *gege*’s brilliant plays during the game…”

Before Lu Boyuan could finish his sentence, Jian Rong kneaded his fingers.

"Then you better watch well." With reddened ears, Jian Rong said somewhat tonelessly, "Watch *gege* carry you to victory."

Perhaps because KWY's support had been constantly speaking up on social media, the barrage in today's match livestream was the most harmonious it had been recently—

[KWY has improved so quickly. In the play-in stage, Japan and Turkey were still just two noobs pecking at each other, but now they can even make it to the semifinals to get thrashed. I'm touched.]

[Apparently their support is a Soft fanboy, he has a set of Soft merch…]

[I just went to check the stream showing their support's POV. He really does keep switching over to look at Soft.]

[Why is everyone talking about that Japanese support? Are you treating my God Lu like he's nonexistent? In God Lu's POV, he also keeps checking on his boyfriend!!]

A second after Pine killed the opposing bot lane duo, an announcement of Jian Rong solo killing the enemy mid laner sounded.

The game was progressing extremely smoothly, and Xiao Bai hit "B" to recall to base. "Though KWY is a bit stronger than they were during the play-in stage, to be able to make it to the semifinals… it's still unbelievable."

Yuan Qian explained, “They got lucky. When they were playing against Europe, one of the European players had an upset stomach, and when they were playing against North America, the North American sub had to be sent in because their starting mid laner had a hand injury. That let them pick up two points… and they just barely squeezed out the North American team.”

There was too much of a difference in strength level between the two teams. The semifinals match ended up being more like a recreational game.

Of course it wasn’t very entertaining to one-sidedly crush the other team, but the interesting part about it was—the KWY members truly did have excellent mentalities.

After Lu Boyuan stole the enemy jungler’s monster, the jungler ran out of Lu Boyuan’s range and did a dance for him.

When KWY was wiped during a team fight, the five of them collectively tossed out the white flag emote.

Because of this relaxed atmosphere, even Jian Rong, who was usually constantly dancing on other people’s “corpses” as he went back to base, behaved cautiously as he passed their “corpses” and did his best not to step on them.

As he was moving past the enemy support’s “corpse,” the support suddenly flashed an Ahri heart emote, making him seem both lowly and pitiful.

Meanwhile, Jian Rong—

Jian Rong stopped next to him briefly and responded with an emote of Lu Boyuan's championship skin before he mercilessly turned around and left.

Half an hour effortlessly flew by. TTC won the semifinals match with a final score of 3-0, obtaining their ticket to the MSI finals.

Looking back on this MSI, TTC had steamrolled through the competition like a hot knife slicing through butter. Apart from that one "manipulated" group stage match, they had won all their other games. This gave the LPL's spectators a brand new understanding of the veteran team TTC—

To date, their competitive region's representative team had a top laner, Qian, whose ability to resist pressure was top-tier. He could also step forward in a critical moment and carry the match.

The bot lane duo was extremely well-coordinated; Bye excelled at protecting and engaging, and because of him, Pine was still able to deal the damage the team needed even during a meta in which ADCs were weak.

Since the start of Road's pro career, he had always stood at the peak of the game. Not only was he TTC's core and backbone, he was also widely acknowledged to be the world's number one jungler daddy, the most popular pro player, and the face of the LPL.

And their new mid laner, Soft… was a rough and fierce person to be feared by all.

He was young, reckless, and fearless. His playstyle was vicious, and outside of competitions, he had also poured unlimited vitality into this team. All by himself, he could drive TTC's management up the wall—the management

that used to act the most formal and dignified out of everyone in the entire LPL.

Merely half a year ago, everyone thought that TTC's golden age had already passed. Even though Road was still just as powerful as before, he couldn't help being encumbered by his injuries. The team's reputation had drastically fallen because of the matchfixing incident, and the mid laner and jungler substitutes both weren't up to par either…

But at that moment, in the eyes of the LPL fans, TTC had once again become their strongest team.

While the esports fans were still immersed in joy over the fact that TTC had a chance to win the championship, some disgusting things just had to pop up and ruin everyone's moods.

In two short days, HT lost all their endorsements and income from the LPL, which dealt a major blow to their wallet. HT's management assumed quite the air of someone who decided to smash the already broken pot: on the night TTC won their semifinals match, HT's official account posted the following statement—

[LOL HT: Truly envious of the team that made it to the finals by relying on sheer, dumb luck to play against a weak team. However, you won't get far on luck alone. When will this team and its fans finally understand that?]

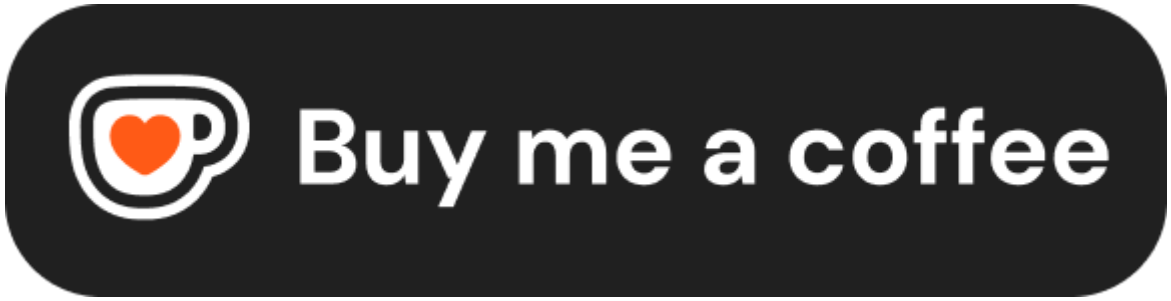
Once again, the online translator exploded because of the LPL fans.

Right as the demolition squad was getting ready to open fire on HT's official account, a newly created foreign social media account with the bio

“TTCMid-Soft” abruptly appeared in front of everyone.

[TTCSoft: @LOL HT, if you have time to sit here and shade other people, you’d be better off making up some more bugs you can use to pause and rewind the game. That way, you can avoid not even being able to win the semifinals. Dad is still waiting to play another match against those five Chronobreak monsters on your team, so I can show you noobs that even if you rewind the game a hundred times, you’ll still be just as trash.]

Wei: Hello friends so sorry this chapter is out a day late I... fell asleep LOL OTL



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ICDI Chapter 128: [Daddy's here, play well]

Thanks to Pessineito and C.Pumpkin for the Ko-fis!

This was TTC's first time officially "responding" to HT after MSI kicked off.

This simple and rough reply stunned many foreign esports fans and pro players. After all, not even those particularly open-minded and bold pro players from the European or North American leagues dared to ridicule someone in this manner. At the most, they would just Photoshop a picture or post something shady; they wouldn't directly call anyone out, much less @ their team's official account.

In comparison, the domestic esports fans were actually quite calm.

The flamers, who had originally picked up their keyboards and were getting ready to charge into battle, sat back down in their gaming chairs with their keyboards in their arms. They even leaned back and cracked open melon seeds as they started pointing fingers underneath Jian Rong's new social media account—

[Sigh, dumbass son, as if you need to personally step forward for a trivial matter like this? All you have to do is practice well, you don't have to pay attention to anything else.]

[As a little illiterate, you know how to create this sort of thing?]

[Look at his verified badge, TTC's management most likely made the account for him. Ding-*ge* is so generous.]

[The bluenette probably held a knife to Ding-*ge*'s throat and forced him to open the account for him, Ding-*ge* doesn't have it easy either.]

[Though you've been in Korea for so many days now, you haven't logged into Weibo to let Daddy know you're safe, yet you're the first one in line to insult someone. Unfilial son!!]

[Dumbass darling, good luck in the finals! If you win, let's party together! If you lose, deal with it yourself.]

[Dumbass son, Dad made it to Korea and bought the ticket for the finals. I'm in seat 3A, row 9. After you win, remember to come down and say hi to Dad.]

[What the hell, the damn bluenette created a new account but didn't follow the official TTC account or his teammates. He only followed Road's dead account, which Road might not even remember the password for anymore since he hasn't posted a Tweet in ten years.]

[What, Road also has an account here? What is it, I wanna follow it… well, isn't following Road's account the same thing as following his teammates' accounts?]

[No, following Road is equal to following his husband, the dumbass is all over his account in a show of blatant PDA.]

……

Jian Rong didn't read a single one of those several thousand comments.

After he posted the Tweet, he tossed his phone to the side and continued to practice. He even found time to say to Xiao Bai, who was laughing himself silly reading the comments, “If HT keeps barking, let me know.”

HT wasn’t in any mood to respond to him again.

It wasn’t clear if something went wrong with the players’ own mentalities, or if they were severely affected by Jian Rong’s psychological attack; either way, HT had an unusually difficult time in the semifinals.

As a matter of fact, HT had nearly screwed up during the spring season. They had ultimately won the season with a score of 3-2, but their opponent was the LCK’s other emerging powerhouse, so everyone felt like the 3-2 didn’t actually mean all that much.

It was only during this semifinals, when HT handed over yet another 3-2 final score against the LEC’s M7, that the LCK fans began to feel a bit nervous, even though HT was the ultimate winner—after all, TTC had won every game against M7 during the group stage! They were hardly even at a disadvantage during the matches! In that case, how come it’s so difficult for you guys to win? You really did win that group stage match by relying on Chronobreak, didn’t you?

More and more of these types of opinions appeared. With the fans from the LCK’s other teams also adding oil to the fire, it could be said that HT was surrounded by enemies on all fronts.

The night before the finals.

TTC went to check out the location of the finals match. On the way back to the hotel, Jian Rong was listening to music with his earphones in.

It was already night, and the interior of the car was dark. When Lu Boyuan's phone screen lit up, Jian Rong subconsciously glanced in its direction.

Even though he had grown up in front of a computer, his eyesight was still excellent to this day.

A little blue app popped up on Lu Boyuan's phone.

After Jian Rong read what the notification said, his eyes slowly widened, and he momentarily couldn't understand the song playing in his earphones.

As they got out of the car and made their way back to the practice room, Xiao Bai chattered away noisily at the front of the pack, and he occasionally looked back to say something to Jian Rong. With both hands stuffed in his pockets, Jian Rong responded half-heartedly with "*mhms*" and "*ohs*."

Lu Boyuan tugged on Jian Rong's jacket as they were walking out of the elevator.

Jian Rong's footsteps slowed down, and Lu Boyuan stretched his hand behind Jian Rong's collar to knead the nape of his neck like he was giving him a massage.

"Why so listless." Lu Boyuan asked, "Sleepy?"

Recently, Jian Rong had been practicing until two or three AM every night, so there was no way he would be sleepy at this hour.

He pressed his lips together. After he confirmed that the people ahead of them couldn't hear their conversation, he said in a low voice, "You booked a hotel room?"

An itinerary notification had shown up on Lu Boyuan's phone.

Lu Boyuan had booked a room for next Tuesday—or the night that they returned to China from the competition.

Lu Boyuan was briefly caught off guard, after which he immediately held back a smile. "I did."

Jian Rong asked, "…when did you book it?"

Lu Boyuan said, "The day you trapped me in the stairwell."

Jian Rong stared straight ahead, neck flushed, and didn't say anything else.

Lu Boyuan couldn't help but avert his face and let out a laugh.

He was just saying that to tease Jian Rong. Lu Boyuan had indeed booked a room; in fact, he had booked many rooms in the hotel where they were holding their celebratory banquet for MSI—he was worried that people would be too drunk to walk when the time came, so he had specially booked some backup rooms.

Fu-*ge* had set up the celebratory banquet long in advance. Regardless of whether they ended up getting first or second place, the banquet would nevertheless be held.

Their boss had always been both wealthy and optimistic.

After they returned to the practice room, Lu Boyuan noticed that the flush in Jian Rong's skin had spread from his neck to his earlobes and was showing no sign of receding anytime soon.

Lu Boyuan felt like he couldn't keep teasing Jian Rong like this, so he bent over and leaned towards him.

But before he could speak, Jian Rong tilted his head and said—

"Let's split the bill."

"…"

Lu Boyuan was startled for a second. "What?"

"The cost of the hotel room." Jian Rong licked his lips, eyes fixed on his computer monitor. "Let's split it."

Lu Boyuan: "."

Lu Boyuan didn't expect himself to be the one ultimately getting seduced.

Jian Rong waited a long time without receiving a response, and he started to frown.

"I'll pay for it this time." Lu Boyuan's throat bobbed as he negotiated with him huskily, "And you can pay for it next time. How's that?"

"……" Jian Rong's face turned completely red. Feeling hot, he couldn't resist reaching up and raking his bangs back. He pretended to be calm as he said, "Sure."

Lu Boyuan returned to his seat.

Jian Rong was already in a solo queue game, and he had to search for quite a while before he found the champion he wanted to play because of how charged up he felt.

Lu Boyuan retracted his gaze, lowered his head, and opened up an app. Then, he separately booked another luxurious suite overlooking the river on one of the hotel's upper floors.

—

The day of the Mid-Season Invitational finals.

The stadium was filled entirely with audience members from all over the world, and they each had their own team that they wanted to support. Some of the spectators were holding support banners for certain teams, while others even stuck the team logos on their faces. The two teams' LED signs were suspended high in the air, becoming the most beautiful scene in the night.

The three LPL commentators were also finally able to move from a small and narrow counter to an actual platform on the left side of the stage.

The match hadn't started yet. After the three commentators finished introducing the two teams to the audience, they struck up an idle conversation.

Commentator A: "Thanks to TTC, we have a spacious place to sit at last."

Commentator B nodded. “Once we get back, I’m definitely going to lose some weight, or else I won’t even be able to fit at the counter from now on.”

The competition organizers were truly a bit unreasonable this time. It wasn’t clear which corporation was in charge of the competition sites, but during the group stage, one of the commentator counters was so small that it felt crowded even when the three of them were standing around it.

“Forget the counter, you should be losing weight regardless.” Commentator C touched his headset and informed the LPL audience of the announcement he had just received. “Oh, we’ve been notified by the officials that we will not be having a ‘pre-game trash talk’ segment for this finals match.”

[No way no way? There’s no way that a team doesn’t even have the guts to film the pre-game trash talk segment, right??]

[They’ve chickened out they’ve chickened out!]

[HT, don’t think you can escape, the post-championship interview will still stab you in the waist.]

[How come it hasn’t started yet?! I’ve been waiting for half a freaking hour!]

The barrage rushed by, filled with excitement. Then, the camera switched shots and focused on the audience.

Holographic images started to be projected. On the stage, the female League of Legends champion Miss Fortune lifted her two large pistols and started walking alluringly towards the audience, hips swaying. The click of

her heels sounded in the audience's ears, and with every step she took, the anticipation ratcheted up another level.

After coming to a stop, she parted her red lips slightly and said one of her dialogue lines to the audience in an extremely sultry voice: "Fortune doesn't favor fools."

A second later, she let out unbridled laughter and unleashed her ult in front of everyone. The moment the bullets fanned out, the lighting technician also honed in with the special effects; yellow spotlights flitted unceasingly across the audience, creating the illusion that the bullets were racing straight towards them. Immediately after, fireworks blossomed in the night sky, giving the audience an absolutely stunning visual display—

Both teams entered the stage from the left and right sides respectively. Simultaneously, the entire audience stood up—and they loudly shouted the names of the teams they were there to support!

Jian Rong halted in front of the computer that he was going to sit down at in a bit.

With his hands clasped behind his back, he looked quietly out at the audience that was currently cheering and screaming for them.

Before arriving at the stadium, Ding-*ge* gave them a heads-up that since they weren't in their own home stadium for this finals match, the cheers and applause for their team would likely end up being suppressed. It was also possible that there might not be any applause for them at all. Ding-*ge* told them to remember that there were at least 100 million people watching

their match back in China, so they should try their best not to be affected by the atmosphere in the stadium.

But at that very moment—

Audience members from their competitive region raised TTC's logo high up in the air and occupied nearly the entire right half of the stadium—in other words, the direction they would be facing when they sat down to compete!

Their roars of "TTC" almost covered up the cheers for HT, the team with the home advantage!

Amidst the dazzling rays of light, Jian Rong spotted a familiar support banner. On it was written: [Daddy's here, play well.]

He had seen this banner before, during his very first competitive match. Back then, nobody had a good opinion of him—he made a living by streaming, and he was a lone wolf who only knew how to lane while utterly ignoring his teammates for the sake of stream quality. How was he qualified to represent an entire team—or even represent an entire pro league in competitions?

Of course, the water friends from the stream were also concerned about this. They messaged him privately, both insulting him and telling him that he should think about this choice carefully. They said that even though streaming wasn't as glorious a path as pro play, at the very least he wouldn't starve to death.

But Jian Rong was never one to listen to them, and he joined the team soon after. These people continued to grumble and swear—however, once they

were done cursing him out, they turned around and went to flame the antis too. When their stream and Weibo accounts were banned, they just changed accounts and started the whole process over again…

From the spring season group stage to the MSI finals, this sign had followed him all the way to Korea.

From the livestream room to the League of Legends' broadcasting channel, his water friends had followed him all the way to the competition stadium.

Jian Rong stared fixedly at that sign. As if he could hear what the owner of the banner was shouting, he drew in a deep breath, followed by another one—then, when the commentator was introducing him, Jian Rong slightly lifted his chin in the direction of that LED sign and silently mouthed something.

"…dumbass."

Not only did the fan holding the sign see him mouth that word on the big screen, everyone else also saw it through the lens of the camera.

The dad fans who knew him well understood his "greeting" in a heartbeat. Instantly, the barrage was flooded with comments like "*who's this dumbass insulting*," "*damn son has no manners*," and "*I freaking raised you for 18 years for nothing*." It was an extremely magnificent sight.

After receiving the signal from the referee, the ten pro players on stage walked over to their seats and sat down.

The moment he put on his headphones, all the surrounding cheers were cut off, and Jian Rong's world narrowed down to his teammates' voices.

A short while later, the first match launched its pick/ban phase.

The two teams followed their original thought processes and didn't really ban the mid lane champions. HT banned the two jungle champions that Lu Boyuan was best at, as well as Pine's signature Aphelios.

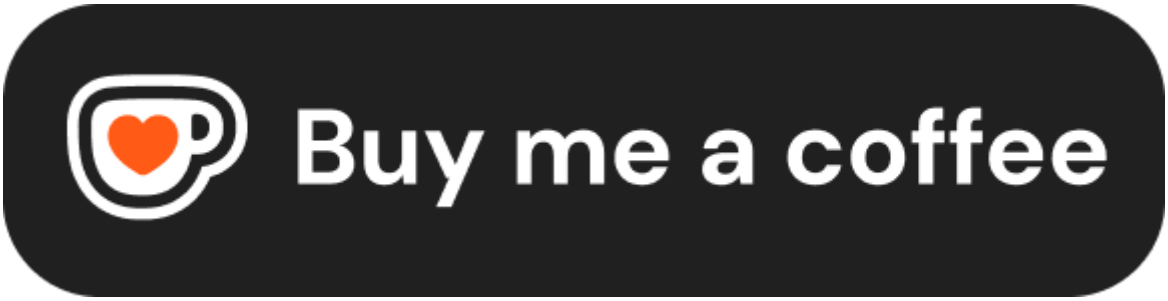
Lu Boyuan contemplated briefly and said, "Let Jian Rong have first pick."

"Sure." Ding-*ge* immediately proposed, "LeBlanc is outside and up for grabs. Jian Rong, if we get her for you, will you be able to carry?"

"Take her." Jian Rong's palms burned from excitement, but from beginning to end, that bratty, aloof expression remained fixed on his face. His voice was cool but resolute.

"No matter what champion you give me, I'll always be able to carry."

Yan: The ending of this chapter made me feel some kinda way :') Rongrong has really come so far since his streamer days!!! And his loyal dad fans too,,, if you're curious, the chapter the [Daddy's here, play well] sign first shows up in is chapter 33! (almost 100 chapters ago omg)



ICDI Chapter 129: Trash.

Thanks to Suvi for the Ko-fi!

As soon as LeBlanc's portrait appeared, all the stream viewers felt greatly reassured.

"LeBlanc! According to the stats gathered from the start of the spring season all the way until now, the win rate for Soft's LeBlanc is—" Commentator A paused before he said emphatically and firmly, "—100%."

Commentator B nodded. "That's right! Although the reason for such a high win rate is because their opponents started consistently banning LeBlanc halfway through the season, this still proves that Soft's LeBlanc is absolutely one of the best in the world!"

The audience members in the stadium were screaming, the stream barrage was spamming "*666*," and the Korean commentators were analyzing how HT should've been a bit more cautious and banned LeBlanc.

Meanwhile, in TTC's voice chat—

After Lu Boyuan got Kindred and Yuan Qian got Kennen, Ding-*ge* said, "We still need a frontliner, so let's get a tank to make it a bit more stable. Any issues with that, Xiao Bai?"

"Take it." Xiao Bai pitched his voice down lower and said, "No matter what champion you give me, I'll always be able to carry."

The tense atmosphere was shattered in one blow by Xiao Bai, and everyone else burst out laughing.

Jian Rong's eyebrow twitched. "Zhuang Yibai, are you a copycat?"

Xiao Bai nodded. "I am~ kiss kiss."

Jian Rong was expressionless. "Then let me see you carry with Sona."

Sona, a glass cannon enchanter support, was a benched champion in the current meta. Though she wasn't strong, many female players were fond of her, and she was colloquially known as 36E[1].

"That won't do," Xiao Bai said seriously. "I don't have a problem with that, but you see, the main issue is with my family's P-baby: he faints when there's too much cleavage."

Jian Rong: "……"

Yuan Qian: "Hahahahaha damn."

Pine: "I'll solo bot this round."

Lu Boyuan adjusted his runes. "You really faint?"

Pine: "…no."

"I have no idea whether he faints or not, but *laozi* is about to faint on stage soon." Ding-*ge* couldn't bear it any longer. "Hurry up and choose!!!"

Both teams' champions were finalized. TTC's team composition was: Kennen, Kindred, LeBlanc, Kalista, and Nautilus.

HT's team composition was: Jax, Jarvan IV, Malzahar, Jhin, and Leona.

Commentator A: "It's obvious that HT wanted TTC to reveal their mid lane champion first before they selected their own. Malzahar's passive skill grants him a major shield, and this champion can also suppress and silence. Actually, Malzahar restricts LeBlanc quite a bit, Soft probably won't be able to kill him easily in lane."

Commentator B nodded. A few seconds later, he realized something was wrong. "…won't be able to kill him easily?"

Commentator A, who had gotten very into observing Jian Rong's games these past few days, coughed lightly. "Slip of the tongue, sorry about that. I meant, he won't be able to lane against him easily."

"Speaking of which… at 3:27 AM today, Soft completed the promise he made in his stream—with 1,587 LP in the Challenger tier, he successfully climbed to the top of the Korean server, becoming its current rank one." Commentator C smiled as he finished informing the spectators of this piece of news. Then he continued, "In that case—let's look forward to Soft's second climb to the top today! The first game of the League of Legends Mid-Season Invitational finals match is about to begin!"

Right as the commentator said that, both coaches shook hands and left the stage. The camera focused on each player as spotlights criss-crossed through the stadium. The game interface appeared on the big screen, and ten champions simultaneously emerged in the Summoner's Rift, accompanied by the sound effects of spawning in the base.

Everyone thought that the camera was going to be locked on the mid lane today, but unexpectedly, the bot lane began to clash frequently as soon as they hit level 2.

When Rish first started shading the LPL on the internet, HT's management and his other team members all turned a blind eye to his behavior—they had always done so. Not only did they look down on the LPL, they also looked down on quite a few smaller LCK teams. Most LCK teams would bow and call them *hyung* backstage when they saw them, so HT grew used to being full of themselves and couldn't be bothered about that one post.

But nobody thought that the situation would end up developing in such a way. HT consecutively lost several collaborations and endorsements, and nearly all the contracts that were still in negotiations fell through as well. Under such circumstances, everyone was definitely going to blame the person who first started stirring up trouble—

Recently, Rish had been given a talking-to by the management and was the target of his teammates' lecturing. He was truly in an abyss of suffering.

So he needed to prove himself in today's match; he needed to regain his image a little.

"What's wrong with Rish?" Xiao Bai muttered. "He wants to come hack at me and not clear minions? Can he get 50 gold or burst me down with 1,000 damage if he hacks away a bit of my health? *Laozi* is a huge tank, could you please show me some respect… P-baby, he keeps going after me! He's still doing it even under pressure from the minions!! If my hook doesn't freaking slice off his head, then my surname isn't Bai!!!"

Pine was too lazy to correct Xiao Bai about his surname. After he finished off a siege minion, he leaped forward and said succinctly, “Get him.”

As soon as he said that, Xiao Bai decisively flashed and hurled out his anchor—which landed directly on Rish’s head. Then, he took advantage of his passive to root Rish in place.

Rish had actually positioned himself relatively cautiously, but Xiao Bai was an old hand at throwing hooks by now. He knew all the crafty angles that would still allow him to hit someone.

Rish treasured his flash, and he stubbornly dragged it out until he had only a sliver of health left before he was finally willing to use it to escape. But a second after he flashed, Pine followed close on his heels with his own flash and threw out a spear—

“First blood!”

“Nice nice!” Xiao Bai walked over to the other team’s tower and flashed his Mastery Emote. “P-baby is awesome, P-baby is the strongest, P-baby is the world’s number one ADC!”

The first blood announcement and Mastery Emote struck a nerve in the other HT members.

Originally, HT’s voice chat was dead silent with almost no communication in the first five minutes of the game. Upon seeing the emote that Bye flashed under the bot lane tower, HT’s top laner knitted his brows together and said, annoyed, “What’s the matter with you? Getting solo killed five minutes

after the start of the game? Concentrate a little, okay, do you want to drag down the entire team again?"

Rish drew in a deep breath and said, scalp prickling, "It's my fault, *hyung*. But that hook shouldn't have been able to reach where I was standing, could there have been another bug…"

Before he could finish his sentence, Master spoke coldly. "Get in the lane and waveclear."

HT's jungler said, "Yeah, just stop talking, go eat your minions. Wait until Master has the advantage, stop trying to put yourself in the limelight."

Since even Master had spoken up, Rish didn't dare to say anything else. "… got it, *hyung*."

Master ate another burst of damage from Jian Rong. His expression was extremely dark.

His champion should've been able to restrict LeBlanc, but since the start of the game until now, LeBlanc had been constantly whittling away his health. He ended up being the one suppressed to the point where he found it difficult to even clear minions.

Soft had improved again.

The fact that he could make his lane opponent sense how strong he had become in a few short days—it was extremely frightening.

If things were to continue like this, forget creating an advantage…

At level 8, Soft dodged his Void silence and smacked Master in the face with a combo, bursting down his health until only a third of it was left. Master clenched his teeth and used his flash, but Soft's chains still latched onto him—Soft had predicted his movements.

The commentators and spectators from both competitive regions felt their hearts rise into their throats because of this scene. But Master was too close to the turret, and he ultimately still escaped successfully with a tiny chunk of HP left. The LCK commentators wiped away their sweat while the LPL commentators slapped their thighs and sighed regretfully…

Master hit "B" to recall to base. After a few seconds of silence, he suddenly said, "Come gank mid."

The bot lane duo, who was originally tentatively communicating in the voice chat, immediately went quiet.

Rish was somewhat stunned. He couldn't help but switch POVs and check in on the mid lane, just in time to see the half-health LeBlanc clear minions with the attitude of a winner.

It had been a year and a half since Rish joined HT, and he had competed with Master for one year now. He had never once heard Master actively tell the jungler to help the mid lane—and this was also a situation where the enemy jungler wasn't even targeting the mid lane.

LeBlanc seemed to have a sixth sense. When Rish's camera locked in on him, Jian Rong flashed TTC's team logo.

With a quiver, Rish instantly switched back to the bot lane.

So freaking spooky!!

Commentator A: “HT’s jungler is back again, this must be his fourth time coming to gank, right… Soft doesn’t have his flash this time, it’s a bit dangerous.”

Commentator B: “Soft is still trading blows with Master. I have to admit, it really is fun watching these two lane against each other!”

Commentator C: “Neither of them are willing to give in to the other. However, I personally feel that Soft has the advantage in terms of laning, even in a situation where his champion is being restrained. On top of that, his opponent is Master… Soft’s too strong, it really is the power of youth.”

Commentator A: “Mn. After all, Soft is a man who challenged everyone in the LPL to a solo duel.”

Commentator B: “You know that too?!”

Commentator A: “Doesn’t everyone? Kongkong posted it on Weibo, it’s really incredible.”

Commentator B: “Really incredible.”

Commentator C: “Forget about that! HT’s jungler is here!!!”

With no hesitation whatsoever, Master flashed and used his ult, suppressing Jian Rong. The jungler’s Jarvan flashed, followed up with his E and Q, and knocked Jian Rong straight up into the air before also unleashing his ult!

All their skills were used! They were determined to kill him!

When Jian Rong only had a tiny sliver of health remaining, HT's jungler said in the voice chat, "*Hyung*, the kill is yours…"

Before he could finish, there was another sound of a flash—

Lu Boyuan's Kindred charged into the battlefield! He used his ult and blessed the ground underneath them—all enemy and ally units inside the zone with less than 10% health were rendered invulnerable to damage and heals. By doing so, he successfully saved the low-health Jian Rong.

During the last two times Jian Rong was ganked, Lu Boyuan had stolen countless monsters from HT, helped Yuan Qian create a major advantage for himself, and aided the bot lane in a tower dive.

Right now, he had two kills on hand, and he forced his way in as the champion with the highest level in the entire game. Within just a few of Lu Boyuan's autos, Master had no choice but to dodge back into the zone of Lu Boyuan's ult.

Commentator A: "God Lu's ult has ended! Soft received a heal—and he instantly attacks Master, getting the kill!"

Commentator B: "Jarvan is much too underleveled compared to God Lu, he can only E, Q, and run away. But as if God Lu would let you escape?! With an E and a slow, you're forced to stay!"

Commentator C: "And then—mn, he gave the kill to Soft."

Commentator A: "Mhm, routine procedure, routine procedure. It's normal to give the kill to the mid laner, since it's a double kill, after all."

Commentator B: “It’s also normal to give the kill to Soft, since he’s his teammate, after all.”

Commentator C: “…right, let’s watch this replay! First, Soft was double-flash ganked by the enemy mid laner and jungler. Then God Lu, who was already prepared to countergank, threw out an online dating flash… I’m sorry, that was a slip of the tongue. He threw out a teammate camaraderie flash and saved Soft…”

HT’s bot lane fought frantically in the lane but ended up being taught a lesson instead; HT’s top lane was unsuccessful in its farming and was furiously ganked; HT’s mid lane forced a gank with two flashes but was counterganked…

From the beginning till now, TTC had maintained complete control over the rhythm of the game.

Once the bot lane tower was pushed, TTC’s duo didn’t linger any longer. They headed straight for the mid lane tower and waited for a chance to start a team fight. Four of them tower dove Master in the mid lane before they grouped together to get the drake, the Rift Herald, and to invade the enemy’s jungle…

Twenty-five minutes in, a small team fight concluded. TTC beautifully traded one member for three of HT’s, and Jian Rong got two kills. After he upgraded his equipment, he solo killed the enemy jungler as a way to inform everyone on the opposing team—LeBlanc’s time had arrived.

If LeBlanc's time had arrived, that meant that some people were about to suffer greatly.

During this period of time when Jian Rong was playing on the Korean server, many ADCs in the higher tiers would break out into a damn cold sweat when they saw the other team's mid laner take out a champion like Zed, Talon, or LeBlanc. Especially if they saw that the opponent was sporting an ID called "softsndd" upon entering the game—don't even ask. The answer was that they instantly felt the urge to AFK at spawn.

In all the years Rish had been a trainee or pro player in the LCK, he had never been as miserable as he was now.

Killed while clearing minions, forced into team fights, even if he stood at the very back of the team LeBlanc still managed to pop out of fucking nowhere and burst him to death—LeBlanc hadn't ever even used fucking Ignite on him.

On that day, a certain unrelated Squid member sat in front of his computer. As he watched the match, he profoundly lit a cigarette and recalled the terror he felt from being dominated by Soft.

By the time Lu Boyuan destroyed HT's Nexus and TTC won the first game of the match, Rish's score was 0/7/4. If he died one more time, he would've become a legendary ghost[2].

The LPL spectators cheered, while the LCK spectators were dumbstruck—

They knew that HT's condition was average this MSI, and they also knew that TTC was in an extremely good condition.

But… how come no lane was able to get an advantage at all?

Even Master seemed to have been suppressed by his opponent?

The spectators weren't the only ones with that question. The HT members on stage were also equally confused.

Rish, who felt dizzy from the number of times he had been killed, blankly removed his headphones and followed his teammates backstage. After a few steps, they came face-to-face with the TTC members that had also just left the stage—

Rish subconsciously looked towards the most conspicuous hair color in the crowd.

Soft walked next to Road with both hands stuffed in his pockets. There was a relaxed expression on his face, and he seemed to be saying something quietly to Road.

All of a sudden, Soft glanced over as if he had sensed Rish's gaze.

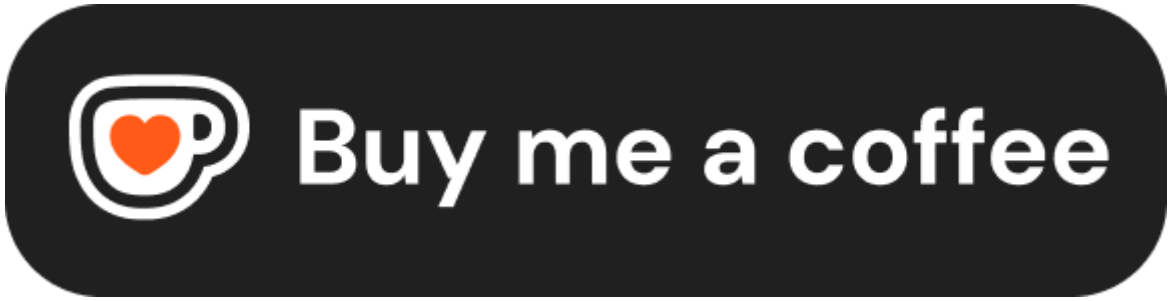
Their eyes only met for a moment before TTC's manager forcefully stepped in between them and broke it off.

But with just that one look, Rish still clearly saw the disdain, contempt, and ridicule in Soft's eyes. From that gaze, he could almost even sense the word that Soft had left unspoken—

Trash.

Translation Notes

1. *Sona has big boobies* ^
2. *Legendary is when you get 8 kills, so legendary ghost is when you get killed 8 times* ^



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ICDI Chapter 130: This is the vanishing health bar technique!

Rish's reading comprehension actually wasn't precise enough.

If gazes had voices, at that moment perhaps he would've heard "*the hell are you looking at*," "*so freaking trash*," and "*how come any piece of garbage can yap away on the internet*" in eight different languages.

There were cameras rolling ahead of them. When Lu Boyuan saw the person next to him staring at HT like a wolf cub, he couldn't help but laugh as he lifted his hand and forced Jian Rong's head back around.

TTC's win for the first match came far easier than expected. To exaggerate it a little—the way they played made it seem as if they were completely invincible.

The LPL commentators and the livestream barrage acted like they were celebrating New Year's. The commentators beamed as they watched a replay of the last game's brilliant kills and team fights. This was also the first time the stream mods were so idle during the finals match of an international competition that they could spam "*666*" along with the rest of the spectators.

However, nobody shared the same joys and sorrows.

On the LCK commentator platform not too far away from the LPL's, the three commentators wore heavy expressions as they forced out small smiles. The only thing they could do was continuously boost up the pro

players, and their brows furrowed tightly together whenever they analyzed the previous game. The left side of the audience, which was full of Korean spectators, was also utterly quiet, and the HT support banners had been temporarily placed on the ground.

Actually, it wasn't that scary to lose one game. HT's 3:2 match during the spring season finals was also hair-raising and full of dangerous moments. But at least every game in that match was closely fought and filled with back-and-forth exchanges.

But that earlier game… was an overwhelmingly one-sided victory.

HT was entirely suppressed by TTC.

Commentator A: "TTC is truly in an amazing condition this year… it's not just the mid lane. The bot lane duo has clearly become even more coordinated than before, while the top lane's ability to engage and resist pressure is as astonishing as ever. And there's no need to talk about the jungle—"

Commentator B: "The jungle has always belonged to our LPL."

Commentator C held back the urge to boast with his commentators. Restraining his excitement, he said, "TTC played extremely beautifully. I also hope that HT won't get discouraged and will adjust their mentalities accordingly, so that they can display their proper strength in the next game."

The intermission was very short. Before the LCK spectators and commentators could even shake off the first game's defeat, the music

sounded, and the two teams returned to the stage after resting and regrouping.

The HT members looked more grave than they had before they went off stage. Rish, who was nearly slaughtered into a legendary ghost, kept his gaze fixed on the floor as he pressed his lips tightly together. Master was expressionless as usual, and he walked alone at the very front of the group, holding his water bottle.

Meanwhile, over on TTC's side.

Yuan Qian walked onto the stage, drinking coffee. Xiao Bai scooted over to Pine and said something to him quietly before they both took their seats at the same time.

Lu Boyuan was still wearing his jacket—it wasn't cold in the arena, so he was the only member wearing his jacket, and his sleeves were tugged down near his wrists. With an indifferent expression on his face, he sat down in front of his computer and put on his headphones. A single close-up shot was enough to spur screams from the entire audience, and even the HT fans, who were in an extremely bad mood because their host team had just lost a game, couldn't help but stare at the big screen.

The last game's MVP chewed gum as he came on stage, looking even cockier than he had back when they just won. Jian Rong had a habit of messing with his hair, and his hair had gotten quite disheveled after just one game. As a result, the makeup artist had snatched him and spent some time fixing it up.

The moment Jian Rong put on his headphones, he heard Xiao Bai say exuberantly, "*Laozi* just snuck a glance at the big screen, those people in HT really have such an awful look on their faces right now hahahaha!!!"

Pine: "Don't put on an expression like you're some scummy person who gained success."

Xiao Bai: "I'm a superior person who gained success!"

Ding-*ge* knocked his notebook gently against Xiao Bai's head, warning him not to say too much; after all, someone was monitoring their conversation. He said, "Keep in mind the problem areas I talked about backstage. You two, don't do anything too extreme, they're fond of 4v2s in the bot lane when they're on the blue side… Relax during this game, no pressure. I bet that a lot of their members have already crumbled internally. If we stay stable, our win is guaranteed."

Yuan Qian shrugged. "There's no pressure on me, really. Maybe I'd lose my cool against 98k, but HT's top laner… he's the same type as me, a veteran pressure-resistant pro player. I'm definitely more fierce than him when it comes to engaging and enduring beatings."

As always, Lu Boyuan inspected his equipment. Sensing the burning gaze from the person next to him, he turned his head and asked, amused, "What is it?"

Jian Rong looked at his wrist and asked, "Does your hand hurt?"

The intermission period was very brief, and they had to rush back on stage as soon as they finished listening to Ding-*ge*'s simple game review and

instructions. Jian Rong couldn't find a chance to ask Lu Boyuan earlier.

Lately, they had undergone intensive practice, and the pain-relief patches had become a constant fixture on Lu Boyuan's wrist. This morning especially, he had directly plastered on three patches. Because Lu Boyuan didn't want the spectators to worry, he had deliberately concealed them with a long-sleeved jacket.

Lu Boyuan said, "It doesn't hurt."

Jian Rong frowned. "Mn."

A few seconds later, Lu Boyuan laughed as his index finger rubbed against the left mouse button. "It really doesn't… stop looking, God Jian, the cameras are watching."

Consequently, the audience saw the bluenette on the big screen frown and stare at a certain spot for quite a while before he retracted his gaze, still frowning.

Before the commentators could analyze what Soft was looking at, the image on the big screen changed, and they entered the pick/ban phase for the second game.

Since the other team had first pick this time, Ding-*ge* didn't even hesitate. "We're banning LeBlanc this game, don't let Master have it."

Jian Rong: "Am I afraid of his LeBlanc?"

“I’m afraid, I’m afraid.” As Yuan Qian spoke, he shoved LeBlanc onto the ban list.

Recently, the two teams had played many games against each other, so the pick/ban phase didn’t take very long. Soon after, both team compositions emerged—

HT’s team composition was: Gangplank, Gragas, Twisted Fate, Ashe, and Alistar.

TTC’s team composition was: Ornn, Ekko, Diana, Jhin, and Leona.

Commentator A: “HT’s team comp… TTC’s bot lane will have to be extremely careful this game.”

Commentator B: “You know, it’s not great that they let Master have Twisted Fate. Master’s Twisted Fate is very strong at roaming, and that champion is actually how he initially rose to fame.”

Commentator C: “That’s no helping it. Varus is the favored son of this meta, and the red side is essentially short a ban spot by default[1]. There’s also no problem with banning LeBlanc and Renekton. What I’m more curious about is—Ekko jungle? I feel like it’s been a long time since I’ve seen God Lu play this.”

Commentator A: “Ekko can also be considered a carry jungler, except he consumes quite a bit of resources and requires good mechanics. But that shouldn’t be a problem for God Lu, he’s capable of handling Ekko.”

Commentator B: “Then what do you have to say about Diana mid?”

Diana, Scorn of the Moon, had a play rate of 0% in the current MSI, because she was weak in the early game and lacked both CC and AOE skills. This was the first time this AP carry[2]/assassin champion was standing on the MSI stage.

Commentator C: "I got nothing. Did you see that ID? Soft. I'm not worried even if he pulls out Teemo for the mid lane—I'm not trying to imply that I look down on Teemo."

The commentators and spectators expressed their confidence in the team composition chosen by their pro players. They thought that it was definitely some new strategy that TTC had been secretly practicing diligently.

Meanwhile, in the team voice chat—

"Ding-*ge* told you to pick a late game champion to scare them, not to scare us." Xiao Bai stared at the Diana sitting next to him and asked in disbelief, "Do you know how to play this champion?"

Chewing on his gum, Jian Rong said arrogantly, "When I climbed up to rank one on the Chinese server with her, you were still muddling along in Platinum."

Xiao Bai was shocked. "That's such bullshit! Damn brat! When *laozi* was playing professionally, you were still out there somewhere drinking milk!"

Right as Jian Rong was about to retort back, he heard Lu Boyuan suddenly chuckle in the voice chat.

It was then that he belatedly realized—when Zhuang Yibai was competing in the finals for the secondary pro league, Jian Rong was indeed freaking drinking milk in the internet cafe entryway……

Jian Rong shut up and quietly entered the lane to clear minions.

Although Diana had just been buffed recently, she still wasn't much of a threat to the enemy in the early game, especially since the opposing Twisted Fate was a ranged champion that Master played extremely meticulously. Twisted Fate didn't have much burst DPS, but that didn't hinder him from whittling away Diana's health. As a result, Jian Rong could only rely on his Q to kill minions prior to level 6.

With such an abrupt change in style, the camera director was somewhat unaccustomed to it, and they kept bringing the focus back to the mid lane for a few seconds before leaving.

Upon seeing Twisted Fate reach level 6, Jian Rong recalled to base and warned, "Twisted Fate has his ult now."

Soon after on the big screen, the audience members saw HT's jungler stealthily approach the brush behind the first tower in TTC's bot lane. Twisted Fate also started making his way over.

At that moment, Lu Boyuan had just finished ganking out the opposing top laner's flash for Yuan Qian. As he sat in the brush and began going back to the base, he checked on the empty mid lane and said, "Bot, watch out."

The P-Bai duo had also caught a whiff of danger, and they retreated together.

Unfortunately, it was no use.

Because they were worried about being ganked, the minion wave had remained close to TTC's tower the entire time. This meant that HT could directly tower dive them without having to wait and push the wave. The enemy jungler, Gragas, popped out from the brush as the special effect from Twisted Fate's ult also appeared above the five TTC members' heads. Gangplank's ult descended from the sky, while Alistar immediately flashed and knocked Pine into the air, tanking the turret damage—the two of them simply couldn't escape.

During times like this, Xiao Bai was extremely collected. "Trade one of them, kill the ADC."

Without saying a single word, Pine did his best to deal damage, but who knew how many times HT had practiced this strategy in private. They had even guessed how Pine would react, and Ashe walked backwards as soon as she used her ult—

"Double kill!"

Master got the double kill.

Pine: "My fault. I couldn't trade their ADC."

"You're fine. They excel at tower diving; if you could've killed one of them, then all that practice would've been for nothing." Lu Boyuan seized the opportunity to invade the enemy jungle and steal resources. He said calmly, "No worries. Let's drag things out, we'll do well in the mid-late game."

Once the bot lane was at a disadvantage, that was equivalent to losing the ability to take initiative for the drakes.

Since Twisted Fate had a major advantage in the early game and also possessed a teleport, he started to constantly meddle in the top and bot lanes. After getting the drake, he coordinated with the jungler to kill the Rift Herald as well. Pine was ganked and killed twice in two levels, meaning that TTC's bot lane was already long gone for this game.

Even though Lu Boyuan had helped countergank the bot lane once and got a support kill while he was at it, TTC was still at an overall disadvantage in terms of the current situation.

Commentator A: "This Twisted Fate really is everywhere… TTC's bot lane doesn't even dare to leave their tower. It truly was a bit of a bad idea not to ban Twisted Fate this time."

Commentator B: "Frankly, this is a little worrisome for TTC. The rhythm of the game is being completely controlled by HT… or rather, by Twisted Fate. Master is too good at keeping the game moving, and it just so happened that Soft chose Diana for this game, who's comparatively weaker when it comes to providing assistance."

Commentator C: "Actually, Diana's been scaling quite well. She hasn't died, and her CS is higher than Twisted Fate's, but her power spike is still a ways away. If TTC wants to make a comeback… they'll have to look for opportunities."

To tell the truth, it wasn't easy to find such an opportunity. After all, they were facing off against an LCK team that was renowned for their stability.

HT knew how to deepen their advantage with the passing of every second in the game.

Four HT members grouped together to push the mid lane; they were never late to getting the drake; they killed both Rift Heralds… soon enough, HT destroyed the inner turrets in TTC's top and bot lanes, as well as the mid inhibitor. They also found a chance to ambush and kill the solitary Xiao Bai and Yuan Qian in the jungle. Then, the five HT members unhesitatingly headed towards Baron!

Commentator A: "I feel like they can't be allowed to get this Baron, or else it'll probably be over in one wave. I think this game… is already more or less determined."

Commentator B: "But what can TTC do about it? Right now, only their mid laner, jungler, and ADC are alive, and they have to protect the base too. Only God Lu can attempt to steal Baron… look, Soft went back to the base already, they're most likely planning to let Baron go…… hm??"

Before Commentator B could finish his analysis, he saw Diana, who had just recalled to base, instantly teleport on the spot—the teleport destination was the control ward that Lu Boyuan had placed above the Baron pit a moment earlier.

Commentator C: "Ah? What's the meaning of this? If they're gonna steal Baron, God Lu can go by himself, right? Wouldn't it have been better to

save this teleport to carry the minion waves in the top and bot lanes?"

Everyone thought that Jian Rong had teleported in order to steal Baron.

So when Jian Rong landed after teleporting and used his Q and E skills to immediately charge into the pit, the three commentators were so astonished that they almost jumped onto the table!

HT already had sight there, and they had long since started discussing how to kill Lu Boyuan, who was hovering around the pit. But the instant Alistar was about to push Lu Boyuan away, Lu Boyuan promptly flashed and dashed, following Jian Rong into the crowd!

Jian Rong's Q struck four HT members, and he dashed down into the pit, using the enemy top laner as a target location. Then he flashed over to HT's mid laner, jungler, and ADC, drawing all three of them in with his R ult! Simultaneously, Lu Boyuan shifted ever so slightly and dodged the enemy Ashe's ice arrow ult before he entered the temporal expansion created by his W skill, stunning the three players—

A second later, Diana's moonlight beam struck inside Ekko's temporal expansion—

Instantly, Lu Boyuan's Q landed on Baron, and he calculated its remaining health before unleashing a Smite—

[TTC · Road has stolen Baron Nashor!]

"Triple kill!"

Commentator A: “Nice!!! Nice!!!! God Lu stole Baron!! Soft got a triple kill!!! They’ve done it!! They’ve overturned the game!!”

Commentator B: “It’s here!! This is the vanishing health bar technique!!!!”

Commentator C: “It’s absolutely incredible how these two used their skills! That damage was an instant burst…”

Before he could finish, the screen went gray.

The five words that everyone was familiar with appeared on the big screen again—[The game has been paused.]

The spectators were stunned; the commentators were dazed.

The referee stepped forward to communicate with Rish, who had requested the pause.

Although the pro players sat quite a distance away, and the camera hadn’t specifically focused on TTC, the audience members close to them could still see that the TTC members were leaning back in their chairs with calm looks on their faces. This included Soft, whose eyes had reddened last time from anger. He merely kept chewing on his gum expressionlessly, and he even stretched his neck from side to side.

A long pause passed before the audience finally realized what had happened.

At the beginning, the LPL audience members were the only ones continuously booing as they held up TTC support banners, doing their best

to convey their dissatisfaction with this pause.

After a while, the other gamers in the stadium—including some HT fans—also began expressing their discontent.

It was okay to lose a team fight, and it was also okay to lose a game.

But it really wasn't okay to pause as soon as you lost, not even if it was a team that they liked.

The stream barrage took over the entire screen—

[Rish you fucking piece of shit!!!!]

[Do you think you're competing in the freaking NBA right now? Trying to pull off a technical timeout???]

[Fucking hell, just play if you're gonna play, otherwise get lost! *Laozi*'s dumbass son is there to compete, not to be mistreated, FUFUFU!!!]

[The cannons are already loaded, if they pull another Chronobreak, I'm going to directly blow up HT's base.]

[Wah I'm so pissed, this really is the first time my face has ever gotten so red watching a match. Rish, you're really something.]

…

Right as the barrage was about to overload the stream server, the three LPL commentators received some news in their headsets, and they let out long sighs of relief.

Commentator A: “Rish believed that his game was affected by a ping spike, but after undergoing official testing, no issues were detected. Consequently, the competition officials have issued a warning to Rish.”

Commentator B: “This… my heart is about to leap out of my chest.”

Commentator C: “Me too. Let’s leave it at that, I hope that Rish can be a bit more cautious in the future when calling for a pause.”

The countdown timer appeared on the game screen.

After entering the game again, Xiao Bai, who had just rushed over to the Baron pit, furiously flashed and ulted. He stunned HT’s top laner, allowing Jian Rong to get a quadra kill.

This Baron team fight brought TTC back from the dead. Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan’s levels caught up to their opponents’ at last, and they were also able to upgrade their items.

With the Baron buff on hand, TTC headed straight for the Elder Dragon.

As soon as they came in contact with HT, Yuan Qian decisively used his ult and engaged. He summoned a lava elemental, which immediately sent HT’s poorly positioned bot lane duo flying into the air. Jian Rong followed up with a Q and E, instantly sending Rish on his way to heaven… Master’s yellow card landed on Jian Rong, and the remaining HT members promptly rushed towards him to try and kill him, only to be stunned on the spot by Lu Boyuan’s temporal expansion. Jian Rong unhesitatingly used Zhonya’s to render himself invulnerable to all damage, while Lu Boyuan charged into the battlefield and sliced Master to death!

Finally, Pine's ult wrapped things up and slowed HT's support, who was attempting to escape. As Xiao Bai cried out "*damn dumbass still wants to run!*", he stunned the support where he stood—

A mechanical female voice mercilessly announced: "—Aced[3]!"

TTC made a beeline for HT's base without even waiting for the minion waves. Yuan Qian's Ornn spearheaded the group like a tank, enduring endless damage from the turrets.

At forty-five minutes, TTC destroyed HT's Nexus one second before the HT members revived, pulling off their comeback. The score was brought to 2:0, and they successfully obtained the match point for the finals.

Translation Notes

1. *Both sides ban three champions each before pick phase 1. B/c blue side has first pick, the red side usually has to use all their initial ban spots on OP champions or they run the risk of letting blue side have them. Hence, the red side has more 'limited' ban spots.* ^
2. *AP = ability power, or magic damage.* ^
3. *Ace = all five members of the opposing team are dead at the same time.* ^

Buy me a coffee

ICDI Chapter 131: Do you need to pause?

Thank you so much to Vera for the generous Ko-fi!

"At the time, I was *this* close to picking up my keyboard and smashing it on Rish's head."

In TTC's break room, separated by the door, Xiao Bai gestured in the direction of HT's room with one hand on his hip. "If it wasn't because I was worried that I would injure him and delay the match, I would've…"

Pine reached out and hauled him down onto the couch. "Stop shooting your mouth off."

"You know, back when the pause announcement popped up…" Yuan Qian glanced at the other end of the sofa. "I really was prepared to try and stop a fight."

As Jian Rong watched the stats analysis on the TV, he sensed his teammate's gaze and said, "I didn't have time for that."

During the brief duration of the pause, one thought occupied Jian Rong's mind—if Chronobreak happened again, how should he trigger this Baron team fight?

It had to take place; there was no question about that. They had endured for over forty minutes solely for the sake of waiting until HT, this incredibly stable team, decided to go for Baron.

The oldest member of the team, Yuan Qian, had already started comforting them in the mid-late game, saying things like it didn't matter if they lost, the score would be 1:1, they still had very high odds of winning.

But Jian Rong didn't want to lose a single game. He only wanted to stomp his way across HT, not even giving them the slightest sliver of a fighting chance.

"HT is doing worse today than I expected. Apart from Master, none of the other players are performing well, especially Rish. At the beginning of the first game, he still had some competitive spirit, but then he transformed directly into a mindless pawn in the second game. Since he was afraid of dying, he didn't dare to deal damage, and he didn't do a single thing right except for his ult." Ding-*ge* said, "Let's keep up this winning streak and do our best to send them home in three games!"

The post-game stats replay finished being broadcasted on TV, and Lu Boyuan stood up from the couch.

Jian Rong tilted his head back and asked, "Where are you going?"

Casually, Lu Boyuan pressed the back of his hand briefly against Jian Rong's cheek. "Restroom."

After he was done with his business, Lu Boyuan was washing his hands at the sink when he heard footsteps sound behind him. Immediately after, a voice said in Korean, "*Hyung*."

Lu Boyuan raised his head and met Master's eyes in the mirror before he turned off the tap. "Mn."

Master had just finished rebuking his teammates in the break room, and his expression was very poor. He lit a cigarette and said, "*Hyung* is still as strong as ever."

Lu Boyuan didn't respond, so Master continued, "I originally wanted to play a proper game against *hyung* this year, but my teammates really are way too trash... Actually, rather than being *hyung*'s opponent, I'm much more interested in competing in the same team as *hyung*. Too bad *hyung* didn't accept our manager's offer back then, it truly is such a pity... Want a cigarette, *hyung*?"

Lu Boyuan pulled out a paper towel. "No need."

Master nodded. After a few seconds of silence, he spoke like he was in a world of his own. "Well, it's not as if the opportunity doesn't exist.

"Quite a few LPL teams keep sending me invites. Even though those teams are all pretty awful, their offers are extremely high. Isn't *hyung*'s contract with TTC about to end soon as well?" Master exhaled a mouthful of smoke and said half-jokingly, "...how about transferring with me, *hyung*? We can be the champions for two years, and then *hyung* can retire in glory..."

"We?" Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow slightly as he let out a very light scoff.

Master paused and started to say something.

"I can become the champion all on my own." Lu Boyuan asked, "Why do I have to carry you?"

Master was a little taken aback, and his smile mostly disappeared. “First of all, the match isn’t over yet, *hyung*. Our team just isn’t in a good condition this time…”

“Also, why do you think—” Lu Boyuan interrupted him and said in puzzlement, “—that you’re worthy of my transfer?”

Used to being fawned over, Master took a harsh drag on his cigarette as his smile slipped even more. “I forgot that *hyung* is dating your team’s mid laner right now. I didn’t mean anything by that…”

“This has nothing to do with my personal business.” Lu Boyuan tossed the paper towel into the trash can and said simply, “I merely believe that our team’s current mid laner is stronger than you.”

Master was stifled to the point that he almost had a heart attack. After Lu Boyuan said that, Master’s face instantly darkened, and he opened his mouth to retort.

“You have a lot of confidence in yourself, but you’re also very average.” Lu Boyuan spoke before he could. As he walked past Master, he said indifferently, “You should head back once you’re done smoking, don’t hold up the match.”

Right as Lu Boyuan left the bathroom, he ran into Jian Rong, who was on his way to find him.

Following close behind Lu Boyuan, Master also exited the bathroom in an attempt to prolong the dispute.

But the moment Master saw Jian Rong, he remembered what that person had said on social media. His argumentative mood vanished, and he promptly walked away with the scent of cigarette smoke clinging to him.

They didn't have time to return to the break room. As they made their way over to the stage entrance, Jian Rong asked, "Was he causing trouble for you?"

His tone of voice was quite contemptuous, as if a single affirmative reply from Lu Boyuan was enough reason for him to immediately go to HT's break room and settle grudges with Master.

Except he was also sucking on a piece of candy that Lu Boyuan had just shoved into his mouth, so his enunciation was a bit unclear.

"No." Lu Boyuan paused and laughed. "I seem to have caused a little trouble for you, though."

Jian Rong looked at him, perplexed.

Lu Boyuan summarized, "I brought a 'world's number one mid laner' title back for you."

Jian Rong stared at him blankly for several seconds before he finally understood what Lu Boyuan was implying.

They were surrounded by staff members and cameras, so Jian Rong restrained himself and stuffed both hands in his pockets as he shifted a tiny bit closer to Lu Boyuan.

Although he was trying very hard to hold back, he still wasn't able to hide the happiness and conviction in his eyes.

Just before they went on stage, Jian Rong leaned over and pressed his shoulder against Lu Boyuan's.

"You did the right thing." Jian Rong said, "At this moment, that title is mine."

The pro players returned to their seats on stage.

Since it was potentially the last game, the entire audience couldn't help but stand up and shout when they saw the pro players appear. It was so lively and loud that it was hard to tell which team the audience members were cheering for.

"Our LPL fans are so amazing." As soon as Yuan Qian sat down, he couldn't resist saying in the voice chat, "Even though it's the LCK's home ground… I actually feel like there are more people supporting our team."

Ding-*ge*: "They really are incredible, you don't know how hard it was to fight for these tickets. The day the finals match tickets went on sale, there was a topic on the hot search called '*I haven't even tried this hard to buy idol tickets before*'."

Xiao Bai: "I'm crying, what about you guys?"

"Is there any point in crying?" Pine checked his equipment and said, "Just don't give the audience an Alice sleepwalking in Wonderland performance, I'm thanking you on their behalf."

“What the hell.” Xiao Bai said, “Don’t be corrupted by that bluenette!”

Jian Rong: “Mind your own damn business.”

Because they had the match point, their voice chat was as relaxed as could be.

Lu Boyuan smiled. “It wasn’t easy for the audience members… so let’s perform well and give them more than their money’s worth. That way, they can go back satisfied.”

They entered the third game’s pick/ban phase.

The three commentators had already exhausted themselves screaming “3:0.” Due to excessive excitement, two of the commentators’ voices were even a little hoarse.

Commentator A: “Alright, we’re about to enter today’s last… the third game! Both teams have regrouped and are ready to go again!”

Commentator B: “The two teams’ ban lists are still more or less the same as before. However, TTC banned Twisted Fate this time, and HT has also banned LeBlanc.”

Commentator C: “But God Lu’s Graves has been freed! I feel like that’s a good choice to go for first—they picked it!”

After Yuan Qian helped Lu Boyuan lock in Graves, HT immediately chose Orianna mid.

Commentator A: “What do you guys think Soft will pick this game?”

Commentator B: “Against Orianna… Fizz? Kassadin? Both of those champions are quite appropriate.”

Commentator C did his best to hold back, but in the end, he had to ask, “Do you think he’ll pull out Zed or Talon…”

The commentators fell into a brief silence.

It felt like a joke to mention those two champions during a finals match…

Commentator A: “He probably wouldn’t… right?”

Commentator B: “Actually, it’s not impossible, but to tell the truth, it’s really hard to solo kill Orianna with either of those assassins…”

Commentator C: “In any case, 2:0, there’s no pressure! I have absolute faith in Soft’s laning abilities, I trust that TTC’s coach and members definitely have the same mindset as me!”

Commentator A: “Who would’ve thought that one day we would end up discussing the chances of a pro player picking Zed or Talon in a finals match…”

Before Commentator A could finish his sentence, TTC’s mid lane champion appeared.

Of course it wasn’t Talon or Zed.

A frowning, dark-skinned champion emerged in front of everyone.

Commentator A: “Lucian!!!”

Commentator C: “I think this is a very plausible choice! Lucian has an unquestionable advantage over Orianna!”

Commentator B: “Lucian is a champion that truly tests a player’s skill level. If I remember correctly, Master picked Lucian in a group stage match, and Soft played Zed, right? That match was especially fun to watch, since the two of them were trading blows back and forth the entire time.”

As they were conversing, TTC locked in Lucian.

Commentator A said resolutely, “Trust me, this game will be even more fun to watch.”

Both sides’ team compositions were swiftly determined. HT’s team composition was: Gangplank top, Orianna mid, Gragas jungle, Jhin ADC, and Alistar support.

Meanwhile, over at TTC, Yuan Qian got his Irelia, along with Lucian mid and Graves jungle. The bot lane had picked Ashe ADC and Sett support.

The game began, and both teams appeared at spawn. Simultaneously, the player POV for each team started streaming as well.

TTC’s player POV was given to Jian Rong this time, whereas HT’s player POV was given to their mid laner Master for the third game in a row.

But the viewer count in these two streams were worlds apart.

Master’s viewer count was a sixth of Jian Rong’s, and his barrage was mostly filled with insubstantial comments.

However, in Jian Rong's player POV stream—

[So laggy so laggy! Considering how rich StarTV's boss is, why doesn't he improve the bandwidth!!! *Laozi*'s lagging to death!]

[It's here, my bros~ Welcome to the live teach and learn for the current meta's strongest Lucian.]

[The strongest Lucian? I'm laughing, did you not watch that group stage match where Master played Lucian? That's what you call a teach and learn from the strongest Lucian, okay? His positioning and DPS are all top-notch, and though everyone's been going after HT these days, anyone with eyes would understand once they see his mechanics. Well, whatever, it's politically correct to praise Soft in the barrage right now, so keep blindly forcing yourselves to hype him up.]

[HT fan, why go through such lengths to be flamed?]

[Mhm if Master's so amazing then why didn't he win that match, hah??]

[Don't ask, the answer is because there was a bug.]

[Don't ask, or you might have your time rewound all the way back to the group stage.]

…

Four minutes into the game, the mid lane was fighting.

Four minutes and forty-three seconds in, the mid lane was fighting.

Five minutes and twenty seconds in, the mid lane was fighting.

The director continuously moved around the camera and couldn't help but sigh internally. That's right, this was the proper opening method for a TTC vs HT game.

Although Soft was the one picking nearly all the fights so far.

Lucian was undoubtedly an early-mid game champion. If he wasn't able to create pressure in the lane, then there was no point in taking Lucian at all.

Naturally, Jian Rong couldn't compete with Orianna in terms of waveclearing, so he kept going up to trade with Master as soon as his skills were off cooldown. Jian Rong's positioning was good, making it very hard for Orianna's skills to land on him, and it was evident that Jian Rong was getting the better end of the deal after a few exchanges. Only a small chunk of Orianna's health remained, but she stubbornly refused to recall to base—

The spectators with omniscient POV could see that Master wasn't going back to the base because HT's jungler, Gragas, was nearby.

Lu Boyuan helped Qian-*ge* bait out the opposing top laner's flash before he turned around and slipped into the enemy jungle. When he saw that their red buff was unexpectedly still there, he immediately said, "Mid lane watch out, their jungler should be close by."

Jian Rong: "Okay."

As Xiao Bai was channeling back to the base, he checked on the mid lane. "You're still not leaving yet?"

Not only did Jian Rong stay, he even pressed forward, practically encroaching on the enemy's tower.

At that exact moment, the low-health, manaless Orianna suddenly flashed HT's team logo at Jian Rong.

As soon as that emote popped up, Xiao Bai knew that there was no way their mid laner was leaving now.

Almost right after, Gragas, who had been waiting in ambush for quite a while, instantly used his E and flashed in an attempt to knock Jian Rong back—which Jian Rong beautifully evaded with a dash!

The fearful and on edge Commentator A widened his eyes in shock. "Soft dodged it! How was he able to avoid that?! Gragas was clearly in his blind spot… just how fast is Soft's reaction speed???!"

In front of Commentator A's dumbstruck gaze, a golden flash of light subsequently illuminated the game—despite being ganked, Lucian didn't just refuse to run. He also flashed right on top of the low-health Orianna.

Master's heart skipped a beat, and he immediately used his own flash. Unfortunately, it was already too late.

A moment before he flashed, Lucian's last two bullets left the barrel—

"First blood!"

Commentator A shouted raspily, "Incredible!"

Commentator B: "Amazing!!!"

Commentator C: “Congrats to Soft—for a successful! Solo! Kill!!!!!”

That play seemed to happen in the blink of an eye. While everyone else was still reflecting on Jian Rong’s incomprehensible blind E dodge, Lucian had already killed Orianna and disappeared into the enemy jungle.

Of course, Gragas couldn’t just let him leave like that, and he pursued him into the jungle—only to run smack into Graves, who had rushed over to provide aid.

With Lu Boyuan’s help, Jian Rong got a double kill. Then, he returned to the mid lane with 88 HP left.

Everyone thought that he was going to clear another wave of minions before going back to the base.

But after Jian Rong walked over to the mid lane, he stood in place and stopped moving.

The spectators watching the overall match didn’t know what was going on, and the commentators were also baffled.

However, the viewers in the stream titled “MSI Finals Player POV – TTC Soft” watched with wide eyes as Jian Rong halted Lucian in the mid lane and—clicked on the chat.

[[All] TTC · Soft: ?]

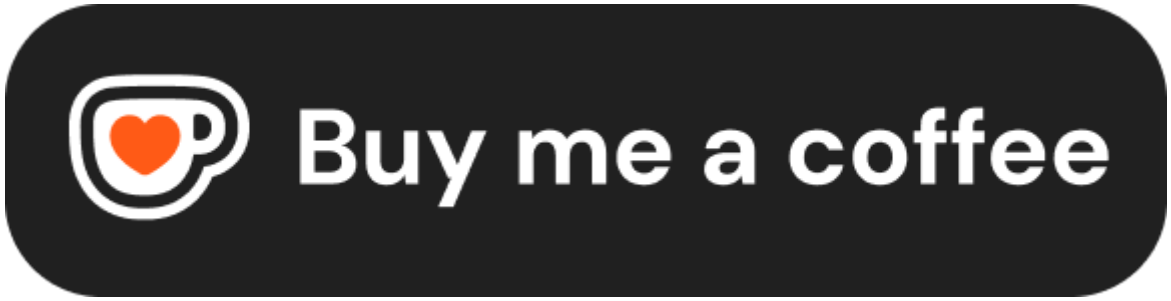
[[All] TTC · Soft: pause?]

—Do you need to pause?

—

The author has something to say:

Not sure if you can see pro players typing in the player POV stream in reality. In any case, you can in my novel (?)



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ICDI Chapter 132: 3:0

Thanks to ML, Kitty, and Somebody for the Ko-fis!

A second after Jian Rong sent that message, half of the barrage emptied out.

Everyone had the same first instinct—screenshot.

Then came an overwhelming surge of amazed exclamations.

[Damn!!!]

[Badass!!!]

[That felt so good, so freaking good T-T]

[This is true badassery! My son really lives up to expectations, Dad's covered with goosebumps right now]

[At this moment, Rish probably desperately wishes that he could travel back in time and strangle his past self for deciding to challenge the LPL's number one flamer.]

[Man, I've watched my dumbass son stream for several years now, and this is my first time seeing him use English.]

[This solo kill was super cool. Never mind Master, I'm his dad and even I was caught off guard when I saw that blind E dodge.]

[Master's expression is way too spectacular. What a wicked director, they still focused on the camera on Master at a time like this hahahahaha!!]

There was a close-up of both teams' mid laners at the bottom left and right corners of the screen, underneath the barrage.

Master had a dark look on his face. The instant he was solo killed, he even smashed his mouse firmly against the table, causing HT's voice chat to go silent again as if it had been sealed away. The bot lane newcomers especially lightened their breathing as well.

A few seconds later, their team's top laner mouthed a swear.

Among the LCK, who would dare to taunt and provoke them like this?!

Yet they weren't in any position to strike back either—disregarding the fact that their mid laner was just solo killed, the state of the game had also changed because of the mid laner and jungler's mistake. Presently, they were already at a disadvantage.

In today's match, the loser had no choice but to shut up.

Meanwhile, the bluenette was mostly expressionless, despite having just ridiculed the other team in an international competition after getting a solo kill. He cleared the minions in front of him and recalled back to base.

TTC's voice chat was currently comparable to the stream barrage; it was filled with shouts of "*badass*." Naturally, Xiao Bai was the loudest of them all, but even Pine tonelessly echoed the sentiment a few times.

Lu Boyuan glanced at the chat, and his mouth curled upwards. “As a reward for the solo kill, you can have the next raptor camp.”

Jian Rong was originally maintaining a poker face, but upon hearing that, the corners of his lips twitched. “Mn.”

Yuan Qian: “Captain, I understand the reasoning behind that, but you ate so many of my minions only to turn around and give your own monsters away to please your boy… teammate. Isn’t this freaking inappropriate?”

“How is it inappropriate?” Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow. “I relied on my own skill to eat those minions in the top lane. At the beginning of the game, I baited out a flash and counterganked for you, is that not enough payback for those minions? Don’t be too greedy.”

Yuan Qian: “…”

Xiao Bai: “Badass badass badass!!!”

Playing it cool, Jian Rong sneered. “It’s just a solo kill, that’s all…”

“—you actually know English!!!”

“…”

“When’d you pick that up? It must’ve been so hard for you to remember those letters! You didn’t write it on your hand using a pen, did you?!”

“Why don’t you try and keep spouting BS?”

Xiao Bai snickered mischievously. “I was wrong, the solo kill was the most badass!”

This double kill set the stage. Jian Rong’s champion was already one that laned very fiercely, and after getting those two kills, he might as well have carved “*berserk*” onto his forehead.

In lane, Orianna was hard to attack with but easy to defend. Since she could waveclear quite quickly, as long as she took the coward’s way out and stayed under the tower, it was very difficult to “burst” her down.

Unfortunately, the opponent that Master encountered in this game wasn’t so sensible.

Jian Rong dashed and evaded the magic ball flying his way before he once again unleashed a burst of damage on Master. Gritting his teeth, Master decided to retreat back to the turret.

But after Jian Rong’s skills were off cooldown, he continued to approach the enemy tower.

Master: “He’s rushing it, there’s an opening. Quick, come over and gank him, do it properly this time…”

Before he could finish, Graves appeared behind him.

At that moment, HT’s jungler had already fallen halfway into despair—his jungle was completely empty. After taking a lap around his entire jungle, he was only able to eat the Krugs[1].

TTC's mid laner and jungler were already one and a half levels ahead of them, and they hadn't even reached the mid game yet.

Under the tower, Jian Rong poked and unleashed as much damage as he could. Then, he dodged Master's ult—because of that missed ult, Lu Boyuan was able to circle behind Master even more boldly.

Lu Boyuan dashed forward and fired a round before he followed up with his ult, an explosive shell with a recoil that he utilized to leave the attack range of the tower, cleanly finishing off Master.

On his way over to help gank, HT's jungler arrived late and ran straight into Graves in the jungle, who had just finished killing his team's mid laner.

HT's jungler glanced at his opponent's level before checking his own… in the end, he helplessly used his E and fled in the opposite direction.

His running away incited some boos from the live audience.

Right now, this situation was beyond everyone's expectations.

To tell the truth, after experiencing the last few group stage matches, the LCK fans had already started mentally preparing themselves to lose the finals. After all, TTC's momentum was truly unstoppable this year. However—it was one thing to be blindsided by a 2:0 score right off the bat, but this was the third game now! The game that would decide if they ultimately won or lost!

Logically speaking, shouldn't it be a desperate counterattack, a fight to the death? How could Master, HT's backbone and the bulwark of the LCK mid

laners, be solo killed at the very beginning of the game? And how were they already one and a half levels behind TTC's mid laner and jungler less than twenty minutes in? And what was up with you turning tail and fleeing the moment you saw someone else enter your jungle after tower diving your team member?!

The Korean commentators wiped away some sweat and tried to console the LCK fans. "Don't worry! Although HT is currently at a disadvantage, they have an excellent team composition, including an engager, a tank, and AOE skills. The mid-late game is undoubtedly more favorable to us! Also, we have Orianna this round, one of Master's signature champions. As long as he performs well in team fights, does his best to trade, and utilizes his ult wisely…"

"—so what if we let you take Orianna! Don't tell me you're still hoping your Orianna will come into play in the late game?!"

On the other side, the LPL's Commentator A seamlessly picked up where the Korean commentator left off. Unwittingly, the two sides constructed an interesting, unintentional conversation with each other.

Commentator A's neck was red from watching the fights in the mid lane. "Get it through your head! No matter how fierce your Master's Orianna is in the late game, it's pointless! If TTC allows you to drag this out until the late game! I! Little A! Will retire on the spot!!!"

The other two commentators were originally stirred up as well, but they immediately calmed down when they heard that.

Commentator B: “Well, you don’t have to go that far.”

Commentator C: “Get down from the table first, the director is already sending you a warning.”

The mid lane dominance was established. With Jian Rong, this big bad-tempered Buddha, standing guard in the mid lane, Master had to exercise extreme caution without his flash, even if he just wanted to clear minions from under the tower. HT’s jungler also kept hovering near the mid lane, waiting for an opportunity.

Meanwhile, Lu Boyuan seized the chance to take the red buff before he proceeded to head towards the bot lane.

Pine instantly pushed the wave over to the enemy tower. As soon as Lu Boyuan was in position, Xiao Bai’s Sett promptly flashed into a tower dive and unleashed a W+R combo. He directly tanked the turret damage as he bound himself to Rish and slammed him onto the ground. Lu Boyuan and Pine followed up with DPS and finished off Rish.

Lu Boyuan’s DPS was extremely high, and Xiao Bai only endured two hits from the tower before the gank was over, allowing the three of them to safely retreat.

Xiao Bai whistled. “The month I hate the most is February, because I can only pummel Rish for 28 days.”

Lu Boyuan: “Didn’t he just knock you down 17 LP the other day in solo queue?”

Xiao Bai: "……that's because I was paired with an ADC who was even worse than Ding-*ge*!"

The mid and bot lanes were both sailing along smoothly. TTC pocketed the first two elemental drakes, and since Yuan Qian was playing his trademark champion, Irelia, his CS also far surpassed his opponent's in the top lane.

It must be said that LCK teams were actually very good at dragging out competitive games.

But frankly, the instant Master was solo killed by Soft, the remaining four members of the team had crumbled entirely. They were utterly helpless in the laning phase, and they only knew how to fall back when their opponents forcefully destroyed the mid lane's second tower.

Master's brows were tightly furrowed. "How is this supposed to work if you're all scared?! I'm playing Orianna, yet I'm standing at the front of the group, is that right? Are you saving Gragas' ult to blow me up? Nobody knows how to engage anymore? Are you guys planning on retiring the second this match is over???"

HT's jungler drew in a deep breath. "Got it, *hyung*."

As a result, when the five TTC members grouped together to push the top lane's inner turret, Gragas threw out his ult after noticing that Jian Rong had used his dash—and successfully exploded Lucian, Graves, and Irelia all back underneath HT's tower!

Rish: "Nice! Great engage, *hyung*!"

The support, Alistar, headed straight towards Jian Rong with Master's ball attached to him. But right as Master used his ult, a white circle appeared around Jian Rong—in less than a second, Jian Rong used the "cleanse" included with his Quicksilver Sash item and flashed. This removed Alistar's CC and created some distance between him and Master, allowing him to dodge Master's ult.

Before anyone could understand how Jian Rong had escaped, Master had already missed his ult.

Master felt like his heart was about to fail him.

Pine didn't give him another chance to deal damage, and he solidly stunned the flashless Master in place with his ice arrow ult. Tanking the tower, Yuan Qian moved forward and immediately used his ult on Master. Lu Boyuan nearsighted Gragas with his smoke screen before he coordinated with Yuan Qian's DPS and killed Master in a matter of seconds—

Xiao Bai looked at Rish, who was trying hard to dish out damage, and slammed him onto the ground with his R. He said, bemused, "Is this guy trying to do *gua sha*[2]?"

Lu Boyuan did away with Rish in two gunshots. "Seems like it."

Staring at the gray screen in front of him, Master resisted the urge to smash his keyboard. Through clenched teeth, he interrogated the support, "You clearly knew he had QSS, so why were you in such a rush to CC him?! Since my ball was on you, you should've let Gragas go up first and force out his QSS…"

Unfortunately, there was already no point in him saying any of this.

Both carries died too fast, and the remaining HT members had no choice but to withdraw, seeing as how they lacked both DPS and the right state of mind. But Yuan Qian evidently didn't intend to let them go. With a flash and a Q, Irelia forced them to stay, after which Lu Boyuan and Jian Rong simultaneously dashed forward and unleashed their DPS…

The pitiless female voice resounded through the competition stadium for the second time that day—"Aced!"

Commentator A was so excited that he hiked one of his legs onto the table again.

The LCK commentators pursed their lips and shook their heads as they heaved continuous sighs.

After TTC finished pushing the top lane inhibitor, they instantly doubled back for Baron. At this point, there was a 10,000 gold difference between the two teams.

Unless every member of TTC made a mistake, the outcome of this game was already determined.

Thirty minutes in, TTC grouped up and went for the mid lane. In a last-ditch effort, HT's support flashed in an attempt to CC Pine, the only one who didn't have a dash—only for Pine to also flash and evade him.

Lu Boyuan seized the opportunity to flash and fire his smoke canister, slowing Rish, who had positioned himself poorly because he wanted to

move in and deal damage. Using a skill and an auto attack, he promptly killed Rish.

Once more, HT was in an outnumbered situation, so they had to draw back. During the Nexus turret team fight, Master was forcibly engaged by Yuan Qian, and Master's screen went gray again after Jian Rong skillfully released all his DPS. Without Orianna to clear the minion waves, HT was no longer in any position to struggle…

One second before his last teammate died, Rish revived.

In the fountain, Rish stared at his team's empty base, as well as the five extremely well-off TTC members standing motionless outside of the spawn point…

Sensing that something was amiss, Rish frowned and subconsciously shrank back in the fountain.

Did that make a difference?

Xiao Bai directly flashed and charged over to Rish, bringing him out of the fountain with his ult. Then he used the Stopwatch that he had prepared solely for this moment, rendering himself invulnerable to the enemy fountain's damage—meanwhile, Rish was now within the attack range of the other TTC members.

Jian Rong used his Q, W, and a combo; Yuan Qian dashed forward with his Q to help Xiao Bai tank the damage; Pine shot all his ice arrows; and the instant Yuan Qian and Xiao Bai withdrew from the enemy fountain, Lu Boyuan fired an explosive shell with his ult—

“Aced!”

A second after they finished spawn camping.

[[All] TTC · Soft: rish? rubbish.]

Jian Rong turned around and auto attacked away the last twenty HP left in HT’s Nexus, causing the crystal to subsequently explode.

Commentator A shouted hoarsely, “The match has concluded!! Let us congratulate TTC for completely sweeping HT with a final score of 3:0! And becoming the ultimate winner of this year’s Mid-Season Invitational!!!”

Jian Rong pulled off his headphones and heard the LPL fans in the arena cheering “*TTC*” so loudly that it even suppressed the Korean commentators’ voices. All the lights in the venue turned on as inspirational, rousing music echoed through the arena.

Amidst their teammates’ roars and laughter, Jian Rong was tugged into Lu Boyuan’s embrace.

He caught a whiff of the fragrance coming from Lu Boyuan’s body, and he retrospectively dialed back his hostility from the match. Surrounded by the audience’s screaming, Jian Rong was finally able to relax out of the tense mental state he had been in for the better part of the month, and he transferred all of his weight over onto Lu Boyuan.

The staff members rushed on stage to hug the pro players who had brought glory to the team; Xiao Bai wanted to lift Pine up and turn a few circles, but he had give up because he wasn’t strong enough; Yuan Qian hugged the

assistant coach tightly and choked back sobs as he asked why his wife hadn't come on stage too…

While emotionally wiping away his tears, Ding-*ge* went to drag apart their team's mid laner and jungler, who were locked in an embrace and looked like they were about to share a deep kiss any moment now. "Badass, so badass… you two, let go of each other first… you guys played so well… I'm begging you, don't come out of the closet at a time like this, I still wanna be happy for a few more days… we have to go pick up the trophy now… endure it, endure it, you better not do anything unnecessary… you have to control yourselves…"

After all sorts of reasoning, he finally persuaded the two of them to separate. Under the guidance of an employee, the TTC members headed for the center of the stage, where the gold trophy stood quietly.

The instant the five of them lifted up the trophy, there was a *bang*, and countless pieces of golden confetti descended from above.

They took turns holding the trophy, and it ultimately ended up in Jian Rong's arms.

According to the competition schedule, they had to do an extremely simple and brief interview now, and the host walked onto the stage with a translator. Because the audience was too enthusiastic, Jian Rong wasn't able to hear what the translator said at first.

As a result, the translator repeated, "The host asked: is there anything you want to say? A speech for winning the championship or something like

that…”

Jian Rong nodded. With hardly any hesitation, he raised the trophy and said, firmly and emphatically, to the camera, to the entire world—

“The LPL is badass.”

Translation Notes

1. *There was another monster camp here but it was censored out and I couldn’t find an uncensored version, so sorry idk what it is.* ^
2. *Gaming meme in China. It’s a reference to someone whose DPS is too low, forcing them to ‘scrape’ for damage, as if they were doing gua sha.* ^

Yan: And that is our last official competitive match!!! :’) I don’t think I’ll miss googling league terms lol but I will miss Rongrong’s outplays. My favorite game overall is probably still Jian Rong’s pentakill, but this game was super satisfying with the spawn camp ending ehehe a fitting last game indeed. What are everyone else’s fave games from ICDI?

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Chapter 133: My solo kill today… was it handsome.

Everyone had a chance to say something in the interview. They were all tired, so with Jian Rong setting the example, the remaining members got straight to the point in their “speeches.”

Pine took the microphone and said concisely, “We won.”

Xiao Bai latched onto Pine’s hand and brought the microphone up to his own mouth. “Hi everyone this is the world’s number one Sett support speaking…”

Pine said, “If you want the mic, then hold it properly. Don’t grab my hand.”

Xiao Bai: “Stingy.”

Yuan Qian snatched the microphone from the bot lane duo. As he wiped away his tears, he said, “Though I really want to seem cool like them and only give a short speech… I still have a lot of things I wanna say. I received a ton of private messages at the end of last year. Of course, many of those messages were comforting me and cheering me on, but a small portion of them said that I wasn’t suited to this meta and that I should retire…

“Here, I want to say that I absolutely will not retire. I’m not a support-style player, I’m an all-rounder. I can still adapt to countless more metas, and I’m going to play until I physically can’t anymore… Also, I want to thank my teammates, my team, my team’s staff, my boss, my parents, my fans… and my wife. I love you guys. Wife, I love you.”

The camera zoomed in on Yuan Qian's girlfriend, Youyou.

Her eyes brimmed with tears, and the tip of her nose was thoroughly red. Towards the camera, she lifted her boyfriend's support banner high in the air…

Last was Lu Boyuan.

When he took the microphone, the entire audience stood up. Some Korean audience members even pulled out small posters of Lu Boyuan from their pockets to hold up…

Currently, there were many star pro players in League of Legends, but very few were well-liked throughout all the competitive regions.

Road was unquestionably the first person that came into people's minds when they thought about a pro player with region-wide popularity.

He had debuted at the peak, and to this day, he had never lost his title of "the world's number one jungler." New metas never affected his gameplay, and he was always able to carry; he was the most reassuring presence in the LPL.

Lu Boyuan smiled at the camera. His voice was slightly raspy because of exhaustion. "We'll continue to work hard in the second half of the year. Our goal is a grand slam. Thank you everyone."

When Lu Boyuan started to return the microphone, the host said hastily, "Is that all, God Lu? Everyone was really looking forward to what you have to say! Could you add a little more to your speech?"

Lu Boyuan lifted his eyebrow and turned to face the camera once more.

As a result, he spoke again a few seconds later. “Thank you to my team and my teammates… and thank you to my lover.”

Surrounded by the noisy clamor of the audience, he finished, “The LPL is badass.”

…

The MSI stream ended. The water friends were still submerged in joy from winning the competition, so the viewer count dropped extremely slowly in the livestream room. After they finished shouting “*badass*,” they began collectively flaming HT, and after they finished flaming HT, they began hyping up their favorite pro players.

Once the liveliness in the stream dispersed, the festivities started anew on Weibo.

Since the grudge against HT had been blown out of proportion, TTC essentially encompassed all the topics on the hot search tonight.

The number one hashtag was naturally “#TTC won the championship#”. In that topic, the Weibo post that had the most interactions was—[Little Children Of TTC Eat And Drink Well: Congratulations to TTC for winning MSI, the little children have truly been under too much pressure lately.]

[It’s true, you can check their match history and search up their recent Korean server rankings. Nothing comes up in the afternoon or evening, which means that’s evidently when TTC has practice matches. The scores

start up again around nine PM, and each person's record lasts for at least five hours every night.]

[The one who practices for five hours is Road, since he has a hand injury. Adding on the time from the practice matches… five hours is definitely exceeding his quota. The others practice for even longer.]

[Qian-*ge* braved the danger of losing his wife and abandoned our sister-in-law to solo queue by himself until late at night. Pine stopped playing Lulu ADC, and Xiao Bai also stopped playing non-support champions.]

[…if you're gonna put it that way, then that dumbass son of mine… spent each day as if it were a decade.]

[Indeed. Before, he killed people on the Chinese server. Later, he went to kill people on the Korean server. After he was done with that, he still wasn't satisfied, and he went to solo against the other LPL mid laners like he was scheduling a fight with them… an intrinsically heartless murderer.]

[They really gave it their all, my heart aches for the members T-T they can finally rest well tonight~~]

…

Right as the hashtag #Heart aching for TTC# started slowly climbing up the hot search, an official stream notification suddenly popped up on everyone's Weibo homepage—

[TTC · Bye: I'm going live on StarTV in Room #1188 under the category "Leisure – Outdoor Entertainment." Come and watch me ^^!]

The fans, who were in the middle of furiously spamming their concern: "?"

Going live?

Leisure?

Outdoor entertainment???

Confused, the fans clicked on the provided link. The moment they joined the stream, they were met with Xiao Bai's face.

He was clearly drunk, as both his cheeks and eyes were red. It was quite rowdy around him, and so loud that it could instantly drive headphone users mad.

Xiao Bai stared fixedly at the camera. "Is it okay? Can you all see me or not… *hic*. Friends who can see me, type out 18341331373…"

[?]

[Do you want to be beaten up?]

"So you can't see me? Well, whatever, you guys can just listen." Xiao Bai flipped the camera and showed the viewers his current surroundings.

They saw an exquisitely decorated banquet hall, along with Ding-*ge*, Pine, Yuan Qian and his wife, and numerous TTC staff members.

Of course, the most conspicuous part was still the piles of empty alcohol bottles and tables covered in gifts.

Judging from the packaging, there were laptops, phones, iPads… and all sorts of other prizes.

“Yeah, we flew back to Shanghai earlier tonight.” Xiao Bai did his best to read the comments flying across the screen. “Why were we in such a rush… because we didn’t really have anything to do in Korea either, so naturally we wanted to get back as soon as we could.

“Right now, we’re in the middle of our celebratory banquet! Look at these gifts. Apparently, just in terms of presents tonight, our boss prepared this much…” Xiao Bai made a three with his fingers in front of the camera and said haltingly, “Oh yeah, Boss also bought each of us a car, hahahahahaha this is my first car ever! I bet you guys don’t have one hahahahaha!! And these are only the gifts from winning the spring season… ah, I’m so jealous of myself.”

[……fuck!]

[I’m so pissed that I got out of bed and ordered some egg fried rice to-go.]

[What did I just post on Weibo? That my heart was aching for the TTC members??? Am I a fucking dumbass????]

[My monthly income hit my bank account two seconds ago, 5,193.80. Even a single phone there is worth more than that.]

[Zhuang Yibai, this counts as jumping categories, doesn’t it? Why is he streaming under Outdoor Entertainment? If I report him, can I force this stream to stop???]

Although the water friends said that, Xiao Bai's livestream room was still extremely lively.

Xiao Bai's camera swayed violently. Everyone saw Ding-*ge* holding a microphone in a white dress shirt, suit jacket discarded, as he shook his head and sang emotionally—

"It's so hard to be a man[1], it's so hard to be a good person… it's been a few decades but I'm still scared and on edge…"

Before he could finish the song, someone said something to him. Ding-*ge* abruptly stopped singing and whipped his head around.

"What??!

"He really flamed them in the all chat????

"What… English? Does he know it?

"Hehe, I don't believe you.

"Go away, don't show me a picture. You definitely edited that just now, how could he possibly screw me over like that?"

In the end, Ding-*ge* stared at the picture that the assistant manager showed him for a full two minutes before he put down the microphone, picked up his phone, and strode out of the banquet hall.

[I'm crying.]

[Such sincere singing, what a moving performance. My eyes are wet.]

[This Meteor Shower is for Ding-*ge*.]

[How come I don't see my husband and Soft?]

[Show God Lu show God Lu show God Lu]

[Can you tell my son to get in the shot and come up with a few insults for his dad? I'll send you five Seas of Stars.]

"My *ge*, ah, my *ge* said he was tired earlier and went to rest." Xiao Bai looked at the screen, chin propped up on his hand. "Jian Rong? He also went to rest… five Seas of Stars, are you being serious?"

The water friend immediately sent one Sea of Stars and said: [Down payment.]

"Forget it, I just got a huge red envelope from the boss, I don't need your money." Xiao Bai wagged his index finger. "I'm not a money-grubber."

In the hotel hallway, Ding-*ge* was in the middle of a passionate argument with an LPL official.

"I know that this kind of behavior really crosses a lot of boundaries, but it's also true that he won the championship and brought glory to our pro league…"

Someone patted his shoulder. Ding-*ge* turned his head and mouthed, "What is it?"

Xiao Bai glanced at the Seas of Stars streaking across his phone screen and asked, "What room is Jian Rong staying in again?"

Ding-*ge* originally wanted to ask him if he needed something from Jian Rong, but taking into consideration the phone call that he was currently on, he said hurriedly, "8801. Why are you holding up your phone like that? Did you drink too much?"

Xiao Bai swiveled around and waved his hand. "I'm making money."

Xiao Bai took the elevator all the way up to the 88th floor.

Once he was in front of room 8801, he confirmed that his stream hadn't disconnected. It was then that his beer-addled brain finally sobered up a little.

"88?" He pulled out his own room key from his pocket and checked it. "Why is my room on the 67th floor?"

After he was done talking out loud to himself, he pressed the doorbell under the urging of the livestream barrage.

Nobody answered.

A short pause later, Xiao Bai frowned retrospectively. "Maybe he went to bed already… whatever, I can return the gifts to you guys. I'll get beaten up if I disturb his sleep…"

With a *click*, the door was unlocked.

Someone pulled open the door to room 8801.

In the wake of that sound, the water friends instantly started spamming the barrage—

[Dumbass dumbass, the world's number one!]

[Dumbass dumbass, parallel to none!]

[Dumbass dumbass, let Daddy kiss you once…]

A few seconds passed.

Through Xiao Bai's phone camera, everyone took in the scene before their eyes—

[?]

[???]

[??????]

They didn't even have time to comment "*WTF*."

Lu Boyuan appeared on the screen with water still dripping from the tips of his hair. His cheeks were damp, and the viewers could clearly make out the droplets of water scattered across his collarbones. It was obvious that he had just finished showering.

Because he had looked through the peephole in advance, Lu Boyuan already knew who the visitor was. He used one hand to rub his hair with a towel as he asked lazily, "What's up."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow. "Say something."

Xiao Bai's brain churned sluggishly. "Jian Rong…"

Lu Boyuan said, "He's showering. Do you need him for something?"

"No." Xiao Bai paused briefly. "…*ge*, what if I told you I drank too much and got possessed by greed and came knocking on your and Jian Rong's door while streaming on my phone, all for the sake of a few Seas of Stars—would you beat me up?"

"…"

When Jian Rong came out of the bathroom, Lu Boyuan was leaning against the window as he sent a text to Pine, telling him to come upstairs to take away the drunkard outside.

Jian Rong had noticed some activity earlier. "Who came by?"

Lu Boyuan turned to look at him.

They hadn't returned to the base beforehand. Like a flock of birds freed from a cage, they had all charged straight for the hotel after the competition was over, luggage in tow.

Jian Rong hadn't brought much clothing with him, so he no longer had any clean clothes he could change into after showering, but he also didn't like wearing bathrobes. As a result, he took some of Lu Boyuan's clothes to wear.

Lu Boyuan's clothes were a size too big for Jian Rong. Both the shirt and pants were loose and baggy.

“Xiao Bai. He was drunk and acting like one too.” Lu Boyuan carded his fingers through Jian Rong’s hair and asked, slightly surprised, “You blow-dried it on your own?”

Even though Jian Rong was already accustomed to these little gestures, Lu Boyuan’s touch this time was evidently different from the way he behaved in front of other people. They had just finished competing in the finals not too long ago, and Lu Boyuan’s palm was still hot.

Jian Rong was quiet for a moment before he let out an “*en*” and mumbled something else.

Lu Boyuan ducked his head a little. “What?”

Jian Rong could smell the peppermint fragrance on Lu Boyuan’s breath. “Saves time.”

Lu Boyuan’s eyelid twitched, after which his gaze swept downward.

Lu Boyuan rubbed Jian Rong’s hair with a bit more force as he chuckled lowly. “Saves time for what?”

Jian Rong’s ears were bright red, and his head felt feverish. Back when Lu Boyuan was giving his championship speech, Jian Rong had already wanted to do this. Now that they were completely alone, he directly took a step forward and stretched up to kiss Lu Boyuan on the lips.

On the first floor, TTC’s staff and a portion of its members were still having fun in the celebratory banquet. It was a grand, vibrant occasion, with champagne and streamers serving as dazzling decor.

Ding-*ge* went through alternating periods of joy and worry. Finally, he couldn't help but pick up his phone and give his team's trouble-causing mid laner a call—except it rang less than one time before it was promptly cut off.

Several pieces of clothing, all around the same size, were scattered chaotically across the carpet.

Lu Boyuan shut off the phone before he lowered his head to kiss Jian Rong. "I'm turning it off."

Jian Rong tilted his head back. From his chin downwards, everything was flushed red, and there were quite a few spots where the color was so dark that it was instantly clear those weren't naturally-occuring marks. He gasped for air, eyes glistening, as he let out a vague grunt. "Mn…"

It was hard to tell whether that was a response or a different kind of sound.

Jian Rong suddenly remembered something. It was only when he opened his mouth that he discovered his voice was already utterly hoarse. "Today, my…"

Lu Boyuan stopped moving and stroked Jian Rong's lips with his thumb.

Jian Rong seized the opportunity to rub against his fingers as he finished, "My solo kill today… was it handsome."

Lu Boyuan: "…"

Lu Boyuan truly wanted to laugh, and his heart felt unbearably soft. He spread his right hand open across Jian Rong's neck and kneaded it firmly before he brushed aside Jian Rong's wet bangs. In a deep, smile-steeped voice, he said in Jian Rong's ear, "It was so handsome that it made me dizzy."

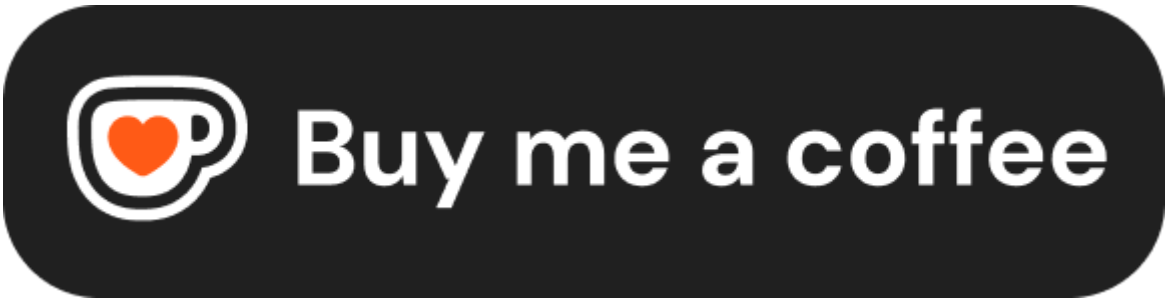
Jian Rong's pulse abruptly quickened even more, and from that point on, he was unable to say another word.

...

Translation Notes

1. *This is a real song (lol) about the woes of being a man.* ^

Yan: The first episode of the ICDI audio drama was just released! You can (try to) listen to it here. Unfortunately, the link isn't working for me right now, but you can also download the app and find the audio drama there (search 漫播 in app store, it's an icon of a white cat on a purple background). If anyone really wants an in-depth guide, lmk haha.



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ICDI Chapter 134: Stay true to yourself.

Thanks to j for the Ko-fi!

Since the members all had their own plans after the celebratory banquet, Ding-*ge* didn't book a car for the team. Instead, everyone was supposed to return to the base on their own once they woke up the next day.

They had only stopped when it was almost dawn, so Jian Rong severely lacked sleep. At that moment, his head hurt, his legs were sore, and he slumped against Lu Boyuan as they checked out of their room.

Originally, Lu Boyuan wanted to extend their stay by another day for his sake, but Jian Rong shook his head without thinking about it. He wasn't that fragile; he didn't need to catch up on sleep in a hotel that cost tens of thousands of *yuan* per night.

Back at the base, Jian Rong collapsed on his bed and went to sleep again. He didn't even bother unpacking his suitcase first.

He slept all the way until the evening.

Pine was making a trip back home, and Yuan Qian was out on a date with his girlfriend. At five in the afternoon, only one person was in TTC's practice room.

After being scolded for an entire day, Xiao Bai bitterly made himself a cup of sugarless coffee. Right as he took a sip of it, he heard the practice room door open, and he subconsciously glanced over.

Then he met the eyes of the living King of Hell.

The King of Hell was wearing a long-sleeved, high-collared shirt. Although he was feeling a bit more energetic after sleeping the entire day, there were still traces of dark circles under his eyes.

Tousling his disheveled hair, Jian Rong saw Lu Boyuan's reply pop up on his phone screen.

[R: Awake? I went out to buy something, I'll be back soon.]

Jian Rong responded with an "*okay*" before he yawned and turned on his computer. Sensing that the person next to him was looking at him, he leisurely turned his head. "What is it?"

Xiao Bai immediately whipped back around. "Nothing!"

Jian Rong felt like something was off about him, but he was too lazy to pursue the matter. Once his computer was turned on, he clicked on the streaming platform.

Xiao Bai's spoon clattered onto the coaster, but he paid no attention to it as he stammered, "Are, a-a-are you gonna stream?"

Jian Rong tore open a bag of small crackers and tossed one into his mouth. "Mn."

"Why are you so hardworking?!" Xiao Bai was flustered. "Wake up a little! We just won the championship yesterday!!! Right now, you should find a

movie to watch, lean back in your chair, and comfortably enjoy your life as a champion…"

"No." Jian Rong was chewing on a cracker, so his enunciation was a little unclear. "I'm going to make money."

"You already have a lot of freaking money…"

"Not enough."

Xiao Bai's eyes widened. "What? Are you gonna go down the dark path? Indulge yourself in a life of debauchery???"

Jian Rong didn't answer.

Previously, he had already confirmed with his boyfriend that they were going to split the cost of the hotel rooms. If they made somewhat frequent visits to hotels like the one they were in last night, which cost five figures a night… there was no way he had enough money.

Jian Rong opened the streaming platform and typed out his stream title: [Dad's here, a casual stream.]

After he completed the familiar stream setup sequence, Jian Rong pulled up the LoL game client and entered the queue. As he was waiting, he sprawled lazily back in his chair and started musing out loud to himself.

"I'll play on the Chinese server today, I'm tired of the Korean server. It's all unintelligible to me anyway, and it's annoying to listen to." Jian Rong clicked on the barrage helper and swept a slow look across the comments.

“Is that son who said I couldn’t climb up to rank one on the Korean server here…”

As he gradually made out what was being said in the barrage, Jian Rong’s voice grew smaller and smaller, until he finally fell into a dead silence.

[This stream is very unexpected?!]

[Son, is your butt okay T-T I waited the entire day without seeing any news of you stabbing Zhuang Yibai, Mommy was super worried!]

[I had to smoke three packs of cigarettes, but I’ve gotten over it now. If you’re gay, then so be it, I’m still your dad.]

[Just as a dog won’t abandon its owner for being poor, Dad won’t abandon you for being gay.]

[It’s June, why are you wearing a shirt with such a high collar? What? Is a certain neighborhood in Shanghai experiencing a temperature drop?]

[Congrats on winning MSI, I heard that you were busy last night. Son, you must’ve been feeling amazing, right?]

[How’s my husband doing?]

[Look at those dark circles, that shirt, the corner of his mouth… God Lu is really something, I’m in love.]

Jian Rong, who hadn’t checked any of his social media after getting to the hotel last night, snapped out of his confusion. He left the queue and put a speaking ban on the water friend who called Lu Boyuan their husband

before he knowingly turned to stare at the intensely guilty person sitting next to him. “What’s going on?”

“…”

The water friends heard Xiao Bai’s wronged response: “They really gave me too many gifts… also, I didn’t think that Captain would be in your room…”

Then, the mic was manually muted.

The water friends watched as Jian Rong and Xiao Bai left the practice room together.

Approximately ten minutes later, Jian Rong came back by himself.

He sat down again, wearing the same expression as usual, and unmuted himself before re-entering the queue.

[……should I be calling the police?]

[Zhuang Yibai doesn’t deserve this.]

[No way? Right after winning MSI, there’s an internal conflict???]

[They got in a fight?! Is that true or not? When I saw the news pop up on my Weibo, I was in such a rush that I opened the stream right in front of my boss…]

“There’s always been internal conflict, and it probably won’t get any better in the future either.” Jian Rong matched into a game. As he entered the champion select screen, he glanced at the barrage. “Study hard, work hard,

stop stirring up drama about your dad all the time on Weibo… we didn't fight, Ding-*ge* was looking for him."

Ding-*ge* sped back to the base like his own house was on fire for the sake of firmly scolding those two troublemakers.

But if Jian Rong suddenly went offline after only streaming for a few minutes, it would create even more rumors. As a result, Ding-*ge* merely warned him not to take the barrage too seriously before he let him return.

Reading the barrage, Jian Rong replied to the comments one by one. "Why was Captain in my room last night… we were discussing a new strategy for the summer season.

"Why am I wearing a high-collared shirt… I'm cold. It's 25 degrees outside, yet Zhuang Yibai has the air conditioning set at 18 degrees.

"Where is God Lu… don't meddle in the private lives of pro players.

"Who is Captain's partner, do I have a chance of stealing him away…" Upon seeing that comment, Jian Rong said, "No, not even in your dreams."

With Jian Rong earnestly spouting nonsense, everyone knew that they wouldn't be able to pry any secrets from him, so they had no choice but to take a step back and talk about other topics.

[Dumbass darling, how come you resumed streaming so fast? Are you not gonna rest after the competition?]

[When are you going to hold another water friend tournament? It's been a long time since I've beat up my son.]

[Watching Bye's stream yesterday made me so jealous. Dumbass, how much award money did you get for winning?]

[Why didn't you play Yasuo in this year's MSI?]

[You didn't challenge Rish to a fight backstage after the competition?]

"I am resting, it's not like playing ranked is tiring. I'm just streaming while I play to earn some money, that's all. I'm only gonna stream for a bit before I go eat dinner." Jian Rong picked Zed and adjusted his runes. "I'll hold a water friend tournament whenever I have time again. Lately, I haven't really been into beating up primary school students.

"Coach said that between Yasuo and me, only one could stay on the stage.

"Challenge Rish to a fight? I can beat him up like he's my grandson whenever I want to in a match, why should I be banned from competing because of him."

As he spoke, Jian Rong solo killed the enemy mid laner and recalled to base to buy items.

[This is my first time coming to this livestream room, and it turns out you're just as arrogant in private, huh. All you did was win MSI, yet you're acting like you won Worlds three consecutive times or something. And what's this hype about being the number one mid laner? Your plays are even worse

than mine. If Master wasn't being dragged down by his teammates, would you even be able to act cocky right now?]

Having this kind of comment pop up right after winning a championship—bystanders and fans both felt like it was bad luck, and they started to type out insults in response.

Jian Rong: "Winning Worlds three consecutive times? That's not enough, your dad should at least be able to win four or five times."

[Hah, there's not much to be said about your character, but you're pretty great at talking big.]

"It's hardly anything compared to your typing skills." Jian Rong sneered. "Who do you even think you are? I could smurf in Platinum and I still wouldn't encounter you. What, the moment you close the game and come into the stream, you're suddenly better than everyone else?"

Since the opposing mid laner had gone back to the base, Jian Rong seized the opportunity to AFK under the tower and switch screens. Before that troll could answer, he promoted him to the rank of room mod and also gave him permission to speak. "Come on, dumbass. Turn on your mic, let's chat a bit. This game was boring me anyway."

Jian Rong looked at the barrage. "His game ID is written on his profile? Let me check his rank. Coming to be a troll when he hasn't even finished shedding all his skin yet, don't tell me he's actually a dumbass… Silver 2? How impressive, can you carry me up the ranks…"

While Jian Rong was speaking, the other person left the stream at the speed of light. In seconds, he cleared his profile and stripped off his room mod role.

[Hahahahahahahaha I'm fucking dying of laughter]

[Promoted directly to room mod… what? Kind of move is this?]

[My son used to do this sort of thing a lot back before StarTV was revamped. One time, he even put a little kid on speaker hahahaha]

[Stay—true—to—yourself.]

Not long after, someone pushed open the practice room door and placed a white plastic bag on Jian Rong's desk.

The person who just came in was wearing the same shower gel scent as Jian Rong.

Someone tugged lightly on the shirt collar wrapped around Jian Rong's neck. The man's fingers brushed very gently against the skin there, and Jian Rong immediately remembered the position he was in last night when he was being held by the neck. His scalp prickled, and his character stopped moving in the game.

Jian Rong instantly muted himself and warned, "I'm streaming…"

"I know." Lu Boyuan released his collar and asked, amused, "Are you not hot?"

Jian Rong shook his head and shot a glance at the plastic bag. “You went to the supermarket? What’d you buy?”

“Your milk. Auntie’s been on vacation these past few days, so the fridge is empty.” Lu Boyuan checked Jian Rong’s stream time on the upper right corner of his screen. “How much longer are you going to stream? XIU’s inviting everyone out to dinner in the group chat, Da Niu and the rest are all going.”

Jian Rong: “I’ll stop after this game.”

Lu Boyuan went back to his room to change. After the game ended, Jian Rong faced the fervent abuse being hurled at him on the barrage and said, “I’m ending the stream… don’t try to fool me with a stream quota, we don’t have any quotas this month because of MSI. You’re not gonna send me gifts if I stop here… do whatever you want, I have money. I’ll resume streaming on the first day of July, and I’ll randomly select some water friends for a tournament. I’m going now.”

—

XIU had invited all the pro players they were familiar with out to dinner, which was taking place at a local BBQ restaurant that was known for being expensive.

They sat at the only outdoor dining table, located in the restaurant’s rear courtyard. A curtain separated them from the rest of the customers, so they didn’t need to worry about disturbing other people.

Only TTC's mid laner, jungler, and support were free today. The moment the three of them walked into the courtyard, XIU promptly shouted, "The bosses are here!"

Savior was puzzled. "Bus? Is this TTC's BBQ shop?"

"No," XIU said. "But they're treating us to dinner tonight."

Lu Boyuan pulled out a chair. "It doesn't matter. We're happy because we won the championship, so order whatever you want."

Da Niu: "Fuck! Server! Add three more servings of beef!"

Originally, the famous miser god Zhuang Yibai wanted to come and get a free meal. When he heard that, he whipped his head around in alarm. "*Ge*…"

Lu Boyuan: "I'll pay."

As a result, Xiao Bai waved his hand in the air like Da Niu. "Add two servings of beef short ribs too! Six raw oysters, six scallops, fill them up with minced garlic for me! And a serving of kidneys to help my mid laner brother boost his performance!"

Jian Rong was at the end of his patience. "…boost your mom."

The table erupted in laughter. The young men had bright, clear laughs, and the entire BBQ restaurant seemed to grow livelier because of it.

If they met up for barbeque, they weren't there purely to eat meat. A server brought them a case of beer, as well as several bottles of Japanese *shochu*, all belonging to different brands.

XIU poured Jian Rong a glass of beer. Lu Boyuan didn't stop him, since he was also there and they didn't have to practice for a while either. It was fine as long as Jian Rong didn't overdrink.

Da Niu had downed a few glasses of beer already, and he was unrestrained with his speech. "In my opinion, HT is an entire team of dumbasses. If it were me, I wouldn't be able to hold back until the day of the finals. I would've long wiped the freaking floor with Rish."

98k took a sip of the liquor. "Their reputation hasn't been great in the LCK in recent years either."

Savior nodded. "Yup~ It seems like ever since Master grew stronger a few years ago and started producing good results, HT became extremely full of themselves. Also, Master really does dislike the LPL a lot, but I don't understand why."

XIU sighed and shook his head. "Well, you see, if the blame has to be pointed at someone, then it's gotta be the fault of this brother sitting next to me… as soon as Master debuted, he was spawn camped by him. It's normal for him to be mentally scarred by that."

Lu Boyuan placed a cooked piece of meat into Jian Rong's bowl. "Don't drag me into this."

"I don't know if it's because of the current meta, but I feel like the LCK teams all played kinda poorly in their spring season this year." XIU poured himself a cup of liquor. "If they're still like this by the time it's Worlds… maybe there'll be three LPL teams in the quarterfinals this year."

The seed allocation for Worlds was already announced: this year, like before, only three LPL teams could qualify for Worlds.

Xiao Bai swallowed some beef and asked, “Which three teams?”

Da Niu: “Do you even need to ask? TTC, PUD, and us, Fighting Tiger.”

Kongkong immediately looked up from his food. “What’s that supposed to mean? Then what about our MFG? We were also super strong this year, okay?”

“Hey hey hey, don’t fight, you guys can duke it out in the summer season.” XIU said, “It’s all the same anyway, our team is reserving this year’s world champion title in advance. As for second and third place, it’s up to the rest of you.”

Jian Rong was in the middle of staring, displeased, at the kidney that Lu Boyuan had added to his bowl. When he heard that, he scoffed coldly. “None of your teams even made it into MSI, what are you trying to reserve in advance?”

Xiao Bai instantly echoed, “Exactly!”

“*Ai*, kid, watch what you’re saying.” XIU put down his liquor cup. “If *gege*’s waist didn’t act up, forcing me to miss out on the finals, you guys would’ve hardly made it to MSI!”

Lu Boyuan lifted an eyebrow and responded breezily, “Honestly, there’s no difference between you and that substitute from your team.”

“What bullshit!” XIU slapped his thigh and said, “If I were the one playing, would you have dared to invade my jungle like that? Would your boyfriend have been able to farm so happily?!”

Lu Boyuan said, amused, “Are you starting to lose your memory with old age? Hasn’t your jungle always been mine?”

“My farming?” Jian Rong jerked his chin in Savior’s direction. “Why don’t you ask your mid laner, does he dare to leave the tower?”

Savior widened his eyes in shock. Face red, he said, “I understood that! I do dare to, my Zoe is number one in the world right now! Don’t be too arrogant!”

Xiao Bai nodded calmly. “Got it. Next time we play against you guys, we’ll ban Zoe.”

Savior: “……”

“Why bother?” Gripping his glass, Jian Rong asked, “Am I afraid of him?”

XIU nodded his head out of fury as he muttered, “Very well, very well, you all just wait. If I don’t beat you up into self-seclusion in the summer season…”

“I’ll be waiting.” Lu Boyuan said, “I hope that we’ll be able to see each other in the jungle when the time comes. You better not avoid me.”

A barbeque dinner ended up in a state of mutual antagonism. The owner of the BBQ restaurant was so scared that he specially made two servers stand

at the courtyard entrance and keep an eye on them. That way, in case a fight broke out, they could immediately call the police.

But they were clearly overthinking it.

While these people were eating, they kept talking about fighting and killing, as if they were itching to murder each other right away. But the moment they were done with dinner, they began shouting "*brother*" again, arms wrapped around each other's shoulders.

"You guys head back first." Lu Boyuan stood outside the restaurant and said, "Jian Rong and I are going to walk around a little."

Xiao Bai was dumbfounded. "Then what about me? How about I go and walk with you…"

"What are you saying?" XIU settled his arm across Xiao Bai's shoulders. "I'll send you home. Our Savior didn't drink, so he can still drive. We'll deliver you straight back to the base."

Xiao Bai: "But I'm also pretty stuffed from dinner, I might as well digest some of it…"

"What's the point of digesting it? Just go back stuffed, it's cute if your face is a bit chubby." Not allowing for any dissent, XIU maintained a firm grip on Xiao Bai. "Let's go, let's go."

It was already late at night, so there weren't many people on this stretch of road. The two of them walked next to the street, their shadows drawn out long by the streetlights.

Jian Rong drank quite a lot, and because of that bickering match earlier, it was truly all going to his head now. Under the brush of the night breeze, he felt like he was floating as he walked.

It was only when Jian Rong saw the stadium on the other side of the road that he belatedly realized something—the scenery nearby was very familiar.

A few seconds later, Jian Rong turned around and saw the internet cafe behind him.

It was called "Flounder Internet Cafe," and there were two flounder fish on the signboard.

Back then, Jian Rong was sitting right underneath those two incomparably ugly flounders, staring up at Lu Boyuan as he handed him a ticket.

Just as Jian Rong was lost in thought, someone pushed open the internet cafe's door from inside, and Lu Boyuan walked out, holding a bottle of milk.

A little dazed, Jian Rong looked quietly at Lu Boyuan.

For a split second, he felt like he had returned to being thirteen years old. At that time, the entire world had seemed lonely to him.

Then, Lu Boyuan appeared and gave him an entry ticket.

Even though it was June, it was still somewhat cool at night.

When Lu Boyuan came out from the internet cafe, he reached out and bumped his hand against Jian Rong's face, checking his temperature. "Does your stomach feel uncomfortable? Drink some milk."

Jian Rong tilted his head back slightly and didn't respond. His cheeks were flushed because of the alcohol, and his eyes were even brighter than the streetlights towering above them.

Lu Boyuan met his gaze for several seconds before he smiled. "Why are you spacing out, little scalper…"

Jian Rong shifted forward a bit and kissed him.

A pedestrian passing by was already sneaking glances at them. Upon seeing that, the pedestrian was startled, and their footsteps slowed considerably.

Lu Boyuan was also caught off guard for a moment. Then, he took off his hat and put it on Jian Rong's head.

He couldn't help but laugh. "What is it?"

"I forgot…" Jian Rong said hoarsely, "That this place was so close to the stadium you competed in for the LSPL."

Lu Boyuan: "That's normal. You can ask Zhuang Yibai, he probably doesn't even remember he played in the LSPL anymore."

Jian Rong: "…"

Lu Boyuan thought of something, and he smiled. "The same boss from back then is still there in the internet cafe. When I went in, he was watching a montage of your solo kills…"

Jian Rong wasn't listening. He leaned forward and brushed his lips against Lu Boyuan's chin.

Lu Boyuan's voice petered out. He lifted a brow slightly and asked in amusement, "When you're drunk, do you like kissing people?"

Jian Rong said, "I like kissing you."

—

There weren't many pedestrians outside of "Flounder Internet Cafe"; even the cars driving by were few in number.

Two young men kissed in the darkness. The taller one used his hand to cover up the color of the other person's hair spilling out from underneath a hat, and his fingers sank into the strands tenderly.

The interior of "Flounder Internet Cafe" was brightly lit and filled with the sound of keyboards clattering.

After the boss of the internet cafe finished watching "Monster Newcomer Soft Spring Season + MSI Best Kills Montage," he felt like he was suddenly revived again. Full of fighting spirit, he opened the LoL game client on his computer and immediately entered the queue.

While he was waiting, he refreshed his Weibo, and two posts that "League of Legends Esports" published a few hours earlier popped up—

[League of Legends Esports: #We are the champions!# Congratulations @TTC Esports Club for prevailing over HT with a final score of 3:0 and winning this year's League of Legends MSI! Simultaneously, we extend our congratulations to @TTC · Soft for being selected as the Finals MVP! Congratulations @TTC · Road for being selected as MSI's overall MVP!

Unafraid of change, the strong will endure forever! After experiencing countless trials and setbacks, TTC, a veteran team worthy of our trust—sets sail once more!]

[League of Legends Esports: [Article: The penalty announcement concerning the inappropriate statements made by TTC's Jian Rong (ID: TTC · Soft) to his opponents during the MSI finals.]]

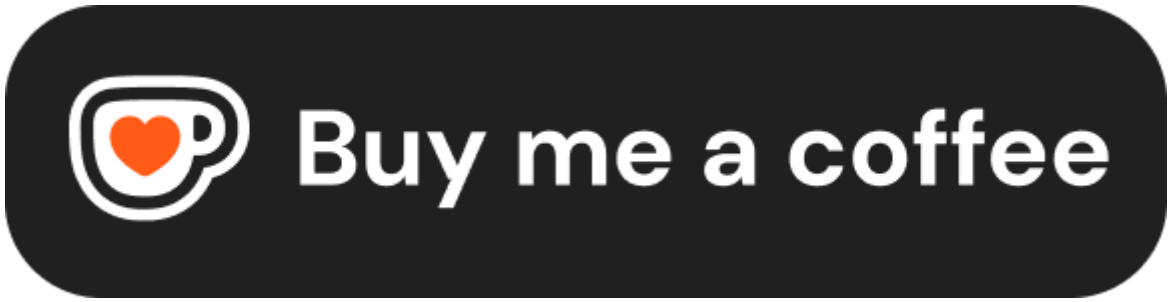
—Main Story End—

Yan: We're done!!! T_T feeling very bittersweet right now. Thank you to everyone for being here for my first full danmei TL, it's really been a journey. Honestly we never expected ICDI to get this much love, but we're so glad and very grateful that it did. A special thank you to anyone who's followed ICDI from the very beginning, especially those who have been commenting this whole time – we really love yall though of course that extends to everyone, regardless of when you're reading this!

Wei: Ahhhh we're done!!!! I'm going to miss Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan and Xiao Bai and all of TTC so much ;-; Like Yan said, I think neither of us expected ICDI to get as much attention as it did, but we're so thankful for all of the amazing readers who have followed us, joined our Discord, and watched lovingly over our son Soft together with us. Let's all especially appreciate Yan who has spent basically every waking moment of free time translating LOL – and thank you all again for all of your support <333

We have two more RoadSoft-centered extras and then a short series about P-Bai (side ship). Once again, thank you for reading and see you in the

extras~~



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ICDI Extra 1: Bitter tea.

So many thanks to everyone who left a Ko-fi last chapter: Tinsunny, lillachan, Somebody (x3), A certain someone, Tan, and Blossom! We really appreciate you all ♡

Half a month after the Mid-Season Invitational ended, the summer season kicked off.

The matches began at three PM on the first day of the summer season. As the streaming platform requested, Jian Rong went live to act as a commentator.

Shortly after he started streaming, his livestream room shot straight to the top of the platform's popularity ranking.

When the dad fans rushed into the stream, along with spectators who wanted to join in on the fun, they saw the teenager sporting a head of disheveled hair that he hadn't tidied up yet because he had just woken up. He chewed on his milk straw as he asked the person sitting next to him, "Which two chicks are pecking at each other today again?"

Xiao Bai: "…"

Xiao Bai: "PUD and Fighting Tiger."

Jian Rong let out an "*oh*." "I'm gonna go to the bathroom first then. Their game is guaranteed to last at least forty minutes."

Xiao Bai glanced at his computer screen, eyes filled with pity. “Didn’t XIU and Da Niu send you red envelopes in the group chat last night so that you would stay away from their match?”

Actually, their original words were: [@R-ong, here’s the fee for not streaming tomorrow, take the money and scram!]

Jian Rong explained, “The platform gave me a pretty big red envelope.”

“Because of money, you can even betray your brothers?” Xiao Bai asked, “How much did the platform give you?”

Jian Rong extended his hand under the computer and casually indicated a number with his fingers for Xiao Bai.

Xiao Bai sucked in a breath of cold air. “Who gives a damn about brotherhood!”

Jian Rong huffed out a laugh and didn’t continue their bickering match.

After the three commentators chatted mindlessly for a while, the game finally entered the pick/ban phase.

Meanwhile, the non-professional commentator, renowned for pissing people off, hiked one leg over the other and launched into his own match analysis.

“PUD banned Twisted Fate, Varus, LeBlanc… LeBlanc? That wasn’t necessary, Da Niu’s LeBlanc is Platinum-level. If any of you ever encounter him playing

LeBlanc in ranked, don't hesitate to one-shot him immediately. If you lose LP, don't blame Dad for not warning you.

"Fighting Tiger got rid of Nautilus, Orianna, Lucian? That Lucian ban doesn't make any sense. Lucian ADC isn't even meta anymore, and 98k doesn't like playing this kind of top lane champion either… the mid laner? Savior knows how to play Lucian?

"Fighting Tiger picked Syndra, Savior chose Zoe… who's stronger? I don't know, they're both about the same. It all depends on fate whether or not they'll land their skills."

[Freaking take it easy a little! These two teams have way too many fans! Dad can't out-flame them all!!!]

[This dumbass streamer is constantly exaggerating things. It's my first time seeing an MSI winner act this arrogant, these dad fans aren't worth mentioning either.]

[Sure, you can insult the streamer, but why are you insulting his dad? Did his dad dig up your family's ancestral grave or turn you into an orphan?]

[Pure dad fan here, it's five minutes into the game and they've both missed 80% of their attacks. As far as I can tell, my son wasn't wrong.]

[What kind of trash stream is this? If you don't know how to commentate, then stop streaming. Don't just blindly freeload, OK?]

[It's been a long time since I've paid any attention to LoL, how come this dumbass is so popular? A crappy streamer is trying to shade pro players? If

you're so great, then you play. What a joke, all you'll ever be able to do in this lifetime is stream a little to pass your days.]

[……this is considered 'not paying attention' to LoL? More like you must've spent the last half of the year in a cave, bro…]

"You come to my stream and tell me to turn it off? And who might you be again? StarTV's Boss Yi?" Jian Rong slouched back in his chair and said lazily, "Watch if you wanna watch, get lost if you don't. What, do you need me to remotely control your desktop and help you leave the stream?

"If you're so great, then you play…" Jian Rong sneered. "I'm playing against Fighting Tiger on Thursday and PUD on Friday. If you have a chance, come out of your cave to watch the matches. See whether or not your dad can do it.

"Room mods, just block the people posting advertisements, no need to ban anyone else. No flamers will be blocked in today's stream, I have more than enough time."

The first twenty minutes of PUD and Fighting Tiger's match consisted almost entirely of farming. Jian Rong glanced at the barrage and just happened to see the following comment—

[Bitter Tea: Why is everyone insulting this streamer? If you don't like the way he streams, you can choose not to watch. The streamer is very polite in real life, the rest of the viewers shouldn't be using awful vocabulary to attack him.]

[??? Isn't he the one who's always attacking us?!]

[For a moment there, I couldn't tell whether this person was being sincere or shady.]

[I suddenly remembered what XIU said in a stream a few days ago. Before, when he asked Road about their new mid laner, Road said that the newcomer was a pretty well-behaved kid. XIU wasn't able to guess who it was for the life of him hahahahahahahaha]

[Bitter Tea: I'm being serious. If there are any more personal attacks, I recommend that the streamer uses legal means to defend himself.]

In all his years of streaming, this was Jian Rong's first time seeing this kind of water friend.

At that moment, a small team fight erupted in the match. Jian Rong snapped out of it and entered full-screen mode so that he could observe carefully and commentate properly. Then, someone pushed open the practice room door.

Lu Boyuan had just finished getting a massage, and his team jacket was draped loosely around his shoulders.

He rubbed his aching neck before he turned around and smoothed down the hair sticking up on Jian Rong's head. "How come you didn't respond to my text."

Jian Rong said, "I'm streaming, I didn't hear my phone go off."

Lu Boyuan swept a look at his computer monitor and lifted an eyebrow. "XIU picked Hecarim?"

Jian Rong: "Mn."

Lu Boyuan nodded. "He's pretty good at using Hecarim's E to run for his life."

Lu Boyuan glanced at Xiao Bai, who was shouting, "*This top laner is such a piece of trash, he started a team fight and smashed Darius right onto my face!*" Xiao Bai had his headphones on, and he wasn't paying attention to them at all.

Lu Boyuan withdrew his gaze and kneaded the back of Jian Rong's neck as he lowered his voice and asked, "Does your stomach hurt?"

Jian Rong was caught off guard for a few seconds before a flush of dark red visibly spread up his neck.

In order to prepare for the summer season, they barely rested at all before they holed up again to practice. Because Ding-*ge* was worried that they were too stressed, he gave the team members a day off yesterday.

Jian Rong and Lu Boyuan stayed in a hotel room the entire day and didn't go outside once. They even ordered takeout to the hotel and ate it there.

Throughout the day, they touched each other intermittently. Some of the condoms provided by the hotel were used, while others were wasted; regardless, the box in the hotel room was completely empty by nightfall.

At the time, Lu Boyuan sucked in a deep breath before he lowered his head to kiss Jian Rong. Then, he picked up his clothes and got ready to go out and buy some more.

Jian Rong didn't let him leave.

Even though Lu Boyuan helped clean Jian Rong up afterwards, he was still concerned that Jian Rong's stomach would feel uncomfortable.

Lu Boyuan looked up at the camera.

"Auntie's lunch was too spicy." Lu Boyuan asked breezily, "Does it feel uncomfortable at all?"

Jian Rong: "No."

Ding-*ge* walked into the room, holding a bag. "Jian Rong, you're up? And here I was, worried that you would forget to stream this afternoon… Auntie said that you didn't eat any lunch, so I got you some rice noodles from that restaurant you like. Eat a bit to pad your stomach."

Jian Rong instantly froze.

Ding-*ge* put the rice noodles down on the table. "What's wrong?"

Lu Boyuan held back his laughter as he shook his head. "Have fun streaming. Check the message I sent you when you have a chance."

Lu Boyuan went back to his own seat and turned on his computer. Jian Rong rubbed his face four or five times before he opened the barrage helper in resignation.

[Hahahahahahaha what kind of spicy dish did the auntie make, come on, why don't you guys tell me]

[So what if his stomach hurts? Why is everyone laughing?]

[Running for his life with Hecarim's E hahahahahaha]

[I can report this for sexual content, right?!]

[Is it what I think it is?! Is it really what I think it is!!]

"It's not… stop freaking imagining things." Jian Rong abruptly changed the topic. "98k did a decent job engaging here. Savior's Zoe stunned Fighting Tiger's ADC, Fighting Tiger is probably done for in this team fight."

[No way no way, do you really think people are watching your stream to hear your commentary?]

[Please comment on the solo you had with God Lu last night.]

[What champion did you use yesterday?]

Jian Rong: "……"

Resisting the urge to go offline, Jian Rong silently recited "*money is more important*" to himself ten thousand times in his mind. Then he gave up and ducked his head to read the message that Lu Boyuan sent him ten minutes ago.

[R: My mom asked me to create an account for her on this streaming platform. If she starts randomly sending strange comments in your stream one day, you can just block her directly.]

[R-ong: ?!]

[R-ong: What's the username for Auntie's account?]

[R: I forgot.]

[R: Green tea? Black tea? Oolong tea?]

Startled, Jian Rong slowly turned his head back towards the barrage.

[Bitter Tea: I don't have the energy to argue with you all like this. If you choose to continue insulting him, I will see you in court.]

[I'm crying from fear, Bitter Tea, you're so badass.]

[This streamer is garbage, lacks manners, and shades pro players from other teams, yet we aren't allowed to say anything bad about him? And what 'see you in court,' have primary school students already fallen so far in this day and age?]

[They don't sound like a primary school student, they sound more like a headmaster.]

[Bitter Tea, you type too slowly, could you go a little faster? Catch up to everyone else's speed, ok?]

[Bitter Tea, you should just stop talking. My son doesn't need a dad like you.]

Immediately, Jian Rong banned the person who insulted Bitter Tea, along with the person who said that he didn't need such a dad.

As he was being interrogated with questions like "*didn't you freaking say that you weren't gonna ban anyone*" and "*it's one thing if you ban the flamers but why the hell are you banning your dad*," he suddenly turned off his camera.

After the water friends spammed question marks for three minutes, the video was finally turned back on.

The unkempt gaming nerd with the rumpled shirt collar from a moment ago was gone.

The teenager sitting in front of the camera was now wearing his team jacket, with the zipper pulled appropriately up to his chest. His hair was neat, his back was stick straight, and he looked full of energy. If he put on a red neck scarf, he could head right over to the neighboring school and raise the national flag.

"When did I say that I wasn't going to ban anyone?" Jian Rong promptly lost his memory and said seriously, "It is the responsibility of each and every netizen to maintain a clean, friendly online community, and I ask that all of you use suitable vocabulary to get along harmoniously with each other. Let's be well-mannered netizens together."

[Bitter Tea: I couldn't agree more.]

[???]

[What kind of BS is this.]

[You leaving the internet is the biggest contribution to creating a beautiful online community.]

[So how exactly is 'well-mannered' related to you at all?]

[Bitter Tea: As a famous streamer, you should be spreading positivity and proper values into the heart of every viewer.]

"I hope that no more profanity will be used, since it's also a lot of work for the moderators to ban people." Jian Rong smiled in front of a screen filled with question marks. "Now, let us watch this team fight. Savior's Zoe uses Sleepy Trouble Bubble—regretfully, he misses his target, and ends up being stunned and killed by the enemy mid laner. It's very unfortunate, but we trust that this isn't Savior's true strength. He will definitely perform even better next time.

"In this team fight, Fighting Tiger has the advantage—98k flashes and kills Da Niu, reversing the situation. It was quite unexpected that Da Niu would choose to stand in such a position. Perhaps it would have been better to walk a little further away from the dragon pit… but that's alright, Da Niu is an incredibly outstanding late-game pro player. Let's continue to look forward to what he will do next."

Xiao Bai took off his headphones and patted Jian Rong's shoulder in alarm.

Jian Rong: "What is it?"

Xiao Bai: "Who are you? Even though you're very nice and I like you a lot, our team is going to compete in a few days, so I still hope that you can

switch our mid laner's soul back. But it's fine if you wanna swap out with him after the match…"

Jian Rong: "Do you mind quieting down a little? You're disturbing my stream a bit."

Xiao Bai: "…"

This one stream depleted an entire lifetime's worth of Jian Rong's patience and acting skills. As soon as he was done, he self-secluded himself in his room.

Lu Boyuan sat at the head of the bed, rubbing Jian Rong's head through the blanket.

Lu Boyuan said to the person on the other end of the phone, "Mom, from now on, don't go to his livestream room too often. It makes him uneasy."

Jian Rong swiftly tugged down his blanket and looked at Lu Boyuan in shock. He mouthed: *I'm fine*—

On the other side, Mama Lu was browsing through a department store. "But I wasn't watching. I've been out shopping with your aunt the whole day."

Lu Boyuan: "Is Bitter Tea not your account?"

"That's my account, but I…" Mama Lu paused before suddenly realizing something. "Oh. That was most likely your dad. When I told him about the stream account, he even pretended like he was all uninterested and disdainful."

Lu Boyuan went quiet for a moment.

After he came out to his dad last month, he was chased out of their family home with a stick.

He hadn't mentioned that to Jian Rong, and he wasn't planning on doing so before everything calmed down.

There was a tug on his sleeve, and Lu Boyuan looked down. With wide eyes, Jian Rong asked him in the faintest whisper, "What did Auntie say?

"Is she angry because all those water friends were insulting her?

"Did I screw things up?"

Lu Boyuan ended the call. "You didn't."

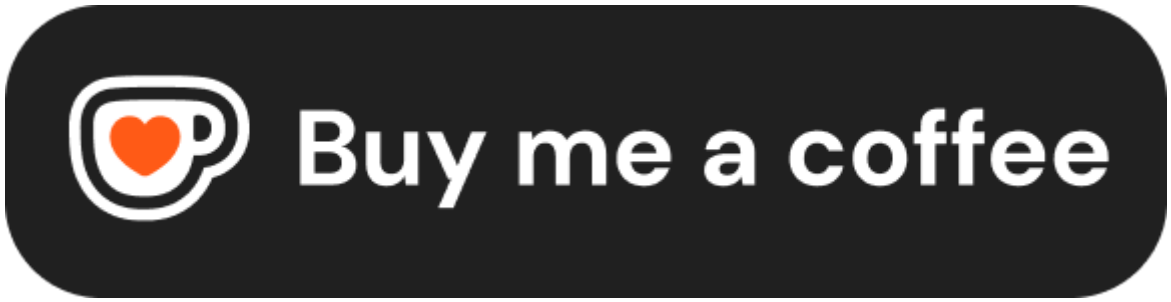
Jian Rong: "Then…"

Lu Boyuan reached out and mussed up the hair that Jian Rong had combed down during the stream. He asked, "God Jian, are you available anytime soon?"

Jian Rong was startled. "Probably after the competition… what's the matter?"

"Nothing." Lu Boyuan smiled. "I just wanted to invite God Jian back to my house again for dinner.

"This time, as my boyfriend."



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ICDI Extra 2: I know. I won't curse at anyone... I definitely won't curse at anyone.

Thanks to nymmiah, ninjapink, and Somebody for the Ko-fis!

On November 3, 2021, like the year before, the World Championship semifinals were being held at Shanghai's Oriental Sports Center.

To the immense satisfaction of the LPL fans, this was China's second consecutive year hosting the World Championship. Cheers rocked through the stadium, which was at full capacity, creating a scene that was more impressive than any other semifinals game had been in the past.

The fans were calling this evening "a sleepless night for the LPL," because both teams fighting for a spot in the finals were from China's LPL division. The two teams were equally important; it would hurt no matter who ended up winning or losing.

They were respectively this year's summer season champion and the LPL's first seed, TTC, and the LPL's second seed, the team that had accrued the most points throughout the year, PUD.

During the previous year's transfer period, both of the LPL powerhouses had experienced player turnover, but after half a year of working together, the team members had already become very well-coordinated. Originally, the LPL fans were all looking forward to seeing the two teams meet in the World Championship finals. Unfortunately, the random matchup outcome

was quite disappointing, and they ultimately had to use "*at least the LPL is guaranteed to make it to the finals*" as a way of comforting themselves.

At eleven o'clock at night, pedestrians hurried past the stadium, wrapped tightly in thick jackets. Meanwhile, the atmosphere in the stadium was unusually intense and lively as fans waved their banners high in the air and shouted furiously. The cries of "TTC" and "PUD" overlapped with each other, and it was impossible to tell which team had louder cheers. The three commentators' voices had already cracked countless times, and their faces were flushed as their blood raced with excitement.

This was forty-three minutes into the fifth game of the S11 World Championship semifinals.

The score of 2:2 hung at the very top of the screen, stimulating every person's heart. There wasn't a single dull moment in the past forty-three minutes. Neither team wanted to drag things out, but their back-and-forth confrontations still caused this round to last deep into the late game.

The last major team fight officially erupted at the Baron pit forty-five minutes in, when TTC boldly went for Baron Nashor to create a turning point.

Soft's secret new dad fan, Commentator A, immediately felt the urge to slap the table.

In this kind of situation where both sides were evenly matched, if a team decided to go for Baron first, weren't they freaking done for?!

Sure enough, PUD's ward caught sight of TTC's actions. Using his oh-so-fluent Chinese, Savior instantly roared in their team chat, "They're going, they're going~! They can't help but go for Baron~! They're finished~!!! *Gege, gege*, come over fast!!!"

98k: "I'll enter first. Where's their mid laner?"

XIU: "He's probably camping in some brush near the Baron pit. Support, go place a ward to see where LeBlanc is. Come, come, everyone come, I'm definitely going to beat that team's dog jungler into submission today—"

98k's Camille directly went in and engaged. But the second he rushed in—

Pine, who was in the middle of fighting Baron, suddenly pulled back his Ashe and shot his long-prepared ult straight towards Savior, stunning him on top of the pit!

Lu Boyuan's Graves dashed to the top of the pit. While the stun was still in effect, he coordinated with the ult from Yuan Qian's Gangplank to finish off Savior.

Xiao Bai followed close behind. "Damn, you didn't leave me an assist?! What kind of people are you guys… whatever, I'll wait for 98k to come up here. Watch how the world's best Leona can stun him to the point of tears…"

Pine: "Noob support, not protecting the ADC."

Yuan Qian: "It's finally going to end soon, my palms are fucking covered in sweat…"

The ward that PUD's support placed down exposed the enemy mid laner, LeBlanc. Jian Rong promptly circled around the support and charged straight up to the opposing ADC with a flash and a W skill—before PUD's ADC could even make out what the hell was going on, his screen had already turned gray.

…

At a final, critical moment before he died, Savior unleashed all the DPS he was capable of to help boost XIU's damage, killing Jian Rong.

Unfortunately, it was useless. In the end, TTC fooled PUD using their Oscar-worthy acting skills and beautifully finished the team fight, trading one member for four.

Immediately, TTC grouped up and pushed mid before heading straight for PUD's base.

Lu Boyuan glanced at his boyfriend's death timer. "Who killed you?"

Jian Rong leaned back in his chair with a scowl on his face as he watched his teammates tear down the enemy's base. When he heard that, he pursed his lips and said, "XIU."

Consequently, just as XIU—the only PUD member currently alive—stepped out of the fountain in an attempt to put up a fight and protect his base, he was chased right back inside of it by Lu Boyuan. Finally, he was killed by Lu Boyuan's ult.

And thus ended the LPL's climactic battle.

TTC defeated PUD with a score of 3:2. Amidst the overwhelming cheers coming from the audience, TTC stood up and went over to shake hands.

Savior: "I almost solo killed you today~…"

"Are you still dreaming?" Jian Rong shook hands with him. He lifted an eyebrow and copied Savior's tone of voice as he said, "My jungler was there during that wave, I was just pretending—did you really think that you could trade away so much of my health~?"

Savior: "…"

The second XIU saw Lu Boyuan, he felt like he was about to explode from anger. Gritting his teeth, he shook Lu Boyuan's hand and swore in a low voice, "What the hell, did *laozi* offend you somehow? I gave you a shirt that cost over 4,000 *yuan* for your birthday. I've never even spent over 1,000 *yuan* on a damn birthday gift for my teammates, and this is how you freaking repay me? You damn scumbag… no, are you even freaking human?!"

Lu Boyuan smiled and relaxed his grip on XIU's hand. "You touched my mid laner."

XIU: "…"

XIU let go of him. "There should be no such thing as love in esports. Both of you are traitors."

—

Once again after the S11 semifinals, all the other LPL teams went on break; only TTC was working overtime.

The remaining spot in the finals was taken by the LCK's HT, and the World Championship finals were scheduled to take place in a few days.

"So tired…" Their last practice match ended at three AM. Yuan Qian stretched and turned off his computer before he opened up the WeChat group chat, which had been going off for quite a while. Immediately, he was rejuvenated. "Dammit, they're going at it again in the group chat."

Xiao Bai yawned and pulled out his phone. "Let Grandpa see…"

[MFG-Kongkong: It's so lonely not having to practice, my bros. Anyone interested in teaming up for some Happy Mahjong 2v2?]

[YY-Doufu: Me.]

[MFG-Kongkong: Maybe not then, you're too bad at mahjong, I don't want to give away beans.]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: Everyone's still awake?]

[MFG-JM: Niu-*ge*, you're not asleep yet? [petting cat head]]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: I was just keeping my wife company.]

[PUD-XIU: Da Niu, watch out, there are children in this chat.]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: What children? Why are you awake?]

[PUD-XIU: Didn't TTC's mid laner just turn 18 this year? We're having a blast at the bar right now, the boss is paying for all of our alcohol tonight.]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: Damn, I forgot, I thought he was 19… Savior would go out to a bar?]

[PUD-98k: He's going wild because he drank too much.]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: Oh man, I didn't know Savior was so good at swinging at his hips?! You can't judge a book by its cover…]

[PUD-XIU: It's times like this where I feel quite sorry for a certain few people. I bet they're still in practice right now, aren't they? How tragic, my little heart aches for them.]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: My little heart aches.]

[MFG-Kongkong: My little heart aches.]

Xiao Bai rolled up his sleeves.

[TTC-Bye: That's right, we're indeed still working hard to bravely compete and win the S11 World Championship finals. I really envy you guys, you can just eat and drink and have fun all day without needing to practice. You don't have to bear the pressure of the entire LPL's hopes and desires, nor do you have to go through the distress of not knowing which brand to endorse as a personal reward for winning the championship because there are just too many to choose from T-T]

[PUD-XIU: ?]

[MFG-Kongkong: ?]

[PUD-98k: Heh]

[TTC-Qian: Oh, you guys are at a bar? How nice. I also told our boss that we should go celebrate at a bar after winning Worlds, but he kept refusing. He insisted on organizing some luxurious half-month vacation in Dubai instead…]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: I've muted this chat, how about everyone else?]

[MFG-Kongkong: I'm going to go play mahjong with Doufu.]

[PUD-XIU: I'm gonna wait a little longer. I wanna see how much more these pricks can humblebrag.]

[TTC-Pine: Do you all have any auto repair shops to recommend? There's a scrape on the car that the boss gave me after the spring season, I want to touch up the paint.]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: Even Pine… can this team be saved at this point???]

[MFG-JM: Going to sleep now.]

[PUD-Savior: The people who get close to ink all have black hearts too.]

[TTC-Bye: Your team's Chinese teacher is so impressive.]

[PUD-XIU: That's for sure… What, are you done showing off? Aren't there still two cocky kings in your team?]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: Yeah, are Road and Soft still typing?]

[TTC-Bye: They went to rest after the practice matches.]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: Together?]

[PUD-XIU: Da Niu, it'll become boring if you continue this line of questioning. Some things don't need to be said too clearly, people will still get it. If you understand, type it out in the chat.]

[Fighting Tiger-Da Niu: Understood.]

[TTC-Bye: Understood.]

[MFG-Kongkong: Understood.]

[PUD-Savior: Don't understand…]

…

Lu Boyuan read over that conversation and let out a low, muffled laugh.

Jian Rong sat next to him with his head lowered as he earnestly applied ointment to Lu Boyuan's right hand. Upon hearing that, he lifted his head. "What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing." Lu Boyuan tossed his phone to the side. "Are you done?"

Jian Rong stared at the gauze wrapped strangely around Lu Boyuan's wrist. He reached out and wiped off a bit of the ointment that was leaking out before he frowned and said hesitantly, "I don't think… I did a very good job."

Lu Boyuan glanced at his wrist and held back his laughter. “God Jian, are you wrapping a *zongzi*[1]?”

“…” Jian Rong’s eyes narrowed. “I freaking told you that I don’t know how to wrap it, but you made me do it anyway…”

As he spoke, he tried to tear off the gauze, but Lu Boyuan evaded him and grabbed onto Jian Rong’s wrist instead. “Don’t, I’m just teasing you.”

Jian Rong shook his head. “It’s too thick, it’ll feel uncomfortable when you sleep.”

“It won’t.” Lu Boyuan said, “It’ll be nice and toasty.”

Jian Rong: “…”

In the end, he didn’t end up rebinding it. After Jian Rong checked again and again that it was tightly wrapped, he finally got up to wash his hands in the bathroom.

Lu Boyuan looked at his right hand, which was heavily swaddled in gauze, and hid a smile before averting his gaze. At that moment, Jian Rong’s phone rang from where he had left it on the blankets.

The caller ID was “Annoying Don’t Answer.”

Lu Boyuan raised an eyebrow and called out to the bathroom, “God Jian, your phone’s ringing.”

The sound of running water came from the bathroom. Jian Rong slathered soap on his hands and answered bluntly, “You answer it.”

Lu Boyuan picked up the call.

“God Jian, good evening. It’s quite late, I’m not disturbing your rest, am I?” Seemingly afraid that Jian Rong was going to hang up, the person on the other end spoke as quickly as if he was setting off firecrackers. “It’s like this, do you still remember me? I’m the manager from the LEC’s KPS team.

“I’m bothering you in the middle of the night because I wanted to tell you that after an internal meeting with the team, our boss is willing to add another five million to the signing fee. So in total, that’ll be nineteen million. Compared to the pay TTC is giving you… surely I don’t need to elaborate on that. Would you be interested in discussing this further? Or if you’re free sometime, we could meet up.”

Lu Boyuan rubbed his fingers together and didn’t say anything.

The other party thought that Jian Rong was starting to consider it, so he persisted, “I know that you’re in TTC because you want to compete together with Road, but think about it carefully. How many more years can Road continue to compete?

“Also, you and Road aren’t in the type of relationship where you can only interact if you’re in the same team, right? As a friend, let me give you a word of advice… you can first come join our team for a few years. Once you make enough money, that’ll be another layer of safety for your future life with Road. Don’t you agree?

“The transfer period is just around the corner, there’s actually not that much time left for you…”

Lu Boyuan said, “He’s busy right now.”

The voice abruptly cut off.

“We have quite a few safety buffers in our life, no need to trouble yourself regarding that.” Lu Boyuan checked the time. “The transfer period is almost here, so I can understand your team’s urgency. But I ask that you refrain from calling professional players after nine PM in the future, since it will affect our players’ rest.”

The person on the other end was already dying to crawl into a hole in the ground. “O… okay.”

“Is there anything else?”

“N-nope! My sincerest apologies for disturbing your rest! Goodbye!”

Jian Rong walked out of the bathroom, wiping his hands. “Who was calling?”

Lu Boyuan put down the phone. “The manager from KPS.”

Jian Rong immediately furrowed his eyebrows. “Him again? So annoying…”

“He gave you another five million and boosted you to nineteen million…” Lu Boyuan smiled. “Not tempted?”

“What would I do with that much money.” A cold breeze slipped in through the cracked open window and attacked Jian Rong’s neck, causing him to shiver and blurt out, “Spread it out on the bed to keep myself warm?”

Lu Boyuan laughed at that and reached out to grab the bottom of Jian Rong's shirt, slipping two fingers underneath it.

"I'm not sure if money can keep you warm." Lu Boyuan said, "But I can. If you accompany me for a few more seasons, I'll warm your bed every night till it's scalding hot…"

Jian Rong's ears reddened as he picked up his phone and blocked that person. "Even if you don't warm it up for me, I'm still going to keep competing with you."

Lu Boyuan nodded. "Am I more enticing than money?"

"I don't know." Jian Rong flung his phone to the side before he bent down to kiss Lu Boyuan. "To other people, I don't know. But for me… you entice me more than anything else."

—

On the day of the S11 World Championship finals, the Bird's Nest was lit up by Lux's Radiant Staff.

The live audience members readied their support items, the commentators furiously downed throat lozenges, and the fans waiting in the stream were already prepared with beer, fried chicken, and roasted skewers.

In TTC's break room, the top laner, ADC, and support stared at the platter of fruit on the table. On top of the sliced watermelon, there was a little sign with a line of crooked writing across it: *LPL [heart] LCK*.

HT had specially sent this over to them.

Xiao Bai: “What is this? Is HT openly trying to poison us?”

Yuan Qian: “No way…”

Pine looked up from Fight the Landlord. “Didn’t they change managers? They probably only gave this to us because they saw that we were screwed over by the Korean competition officials during MSI. They’re afraid of retaliation, especially since there’s a deep grudge between their team and the LPL.”

Xiao Bai: “…Their imagination is really something.”

With a *bang*, Ding-*ge* vigorously slammed open the door and entered the room with a grave and solemn expression on his face.

Xiao Bai glanced at him. “What’s the matter?”

“Nothing.” Ding-*ge* stuffed his hands in his pockets. “I went to verify Jian Rong’s penalty record with the competition officials…”

Pine lifted an eyebrow. “Is he going to be chased out of the LPL?”

“Well, it’s not that bad…” Ding-*ge* paced back and forth. “But, if he stirs up more trouble and gets another penalty within the next two months… he’s going to be banned from competing in a few of the regular season matches next spring.”

Yuan Qian: “…”

Xiao Bai looked troubled. “Should we poison him so he can’t talk for two months?”

“Let’s first make sure that he won’t do anything today, we can talk about the rest later.” Pine peered around the room. “Where is he.”

“The restroom… It’s fine.” Ding-*ge* sighed. “I told Xiao Lu to talk to him.”

After the opening ceremony concluded, a fairly simple pre-match interview with the pro players was broadcasted on the big screen.

Because HT had completely squandered their goodwill in the LPL, barely any audience members watched their interview segment.

When it was TTC’s turn—

Pine: “What do I say?”

The host’s voice didn’t appear in the interview. It was only indicated via subtitle: *Whatever you’d like. For example, do you have any plans after the competition is over? Or is there anything you want to do?*

Pine propped a hand up under his chin and contemplated briefly. “My plans after winning the championship? …Climbing in ranked.”

The host: …

Then came Xiao Bai. “My plans after winning the championship, right?”

The host: *No, that was Pine’s question…*

Xiao Bai: “I’m planning on attaching myself to Pine and muddling along to see if I can maybe touch top ten in the Korean server. I wanna take my parents traveling, though I don’t know if the boss will reimburse me. Will my boss be able to see this interview? Oh, I also wanna go to Changsha to get a drink from Sexy Tea[2]. A lot of people in the team have tried it before, only Jian Rong and I haven’t. I have to try it before he does so I can mock him with the others in the future.”

The host: …

Yuan Qian: “My plans after winning the championship? I want to rest for a while before going around and having fun with my girlfriend. Also, I want to practice with some stronger top lane champions. I have a premonition that the next meta is going to be the real rise of the top lane, and all the other lanes are going to be the little brothers.”

The host: *Okay, thank you.*

Jian Rong: “Getting my driver’s license.”

The host: ……*Why?*

Jian Rong paused. “If there’s ever a need to drive somewhere really far… I can switch off with someone else, so it won’t be too tiring.”

The host: *?*

Jian Rong was silent.

The host: *Is that it?*

Jian Rong: “Mn, that’s all I have planned for now.”

The host: *Thank you very much.*

Lu Boyuan: “My plans after winning the championship… The current plan is to invite my teammate home for a meal.”

The host: *Do you have that good of a relationship with your teammate?*

Lu Boyuan smiled. “It’s very good.”

The host: *Are all the other team members going too?*

Lu Boyuan: “So far, I’ve only invited the team’s mid laner.”

The host: *Got it.*

The host: *If you don’t mind my asking, God Lu, is your home far from TTC’s base? What means of transportation do you use to go back?*

Lu Boyuan raised his eyebrow. “If there’s no traffic… it takes an hour and a half by car.”

The host: *That means it typically takes about three or four hours for a round trip, so it’ll be even better if you can switch off with someone else while driving. Thank you for accepting our interview, I hope that your team does well in the finals.*

There were countless details in this interview. As the netizens typed out “*good luck*” and “*666*,” they didn’t forget to throw in comments like

"*kdlkdl*[3]," "*thanks for your hard work, host,*" and "*Qian-ge run there's something weird about your team.*"

A certain staff member heaved a sigh of relief after finishing her tasks and went to wash her face in the bathroom. When she came out, she suddenly overheard a quiet conversation coming from a deserted storage room nearby.

The voices sounded familiar to her, so she couldn't help but lean against the wall and stealthily glance in that direction—

The face of the LPL and the world's number one jungler king Road pressed their team's mid laner against the wall, a hand on either side of him. He lowered his eyes and asked slowly, "In the team voice chat and post-match interview later, do you know what to do?"

That quick-tempered mid laner Soft, who had solidified his image as a flamer in the audience's eyes the very first time he went on stage, pressed his lips together and ducked his head, brushing his hair against Road's chin. "I know. I won't curse at anyone… I definitely won't curse at anyone."

…

At 10:48 PM on November 12, 2021, in the Beijing National Stadium.

TTC defeated HT with a score of 3:1, winning the S11 World Championship finals.

Altogether this year, TTC won the regional spring split finals, the Mid-Season Invitational, the regional summer split finals, and the World

Championship. Within a single year, they achieved what Korea's powerhouse team HT had spent three or four years attempting to accomplish: a true, genuine grand slam in League of Legends esports.

The moment they destroyed HT's Nexus in the fourth game, TTC's five members jumped up from their seats and hugged each other tightly. Golden confetti sprayed down, fireworks streaked across the night sky, and the three commentators almost leaped onto their table.

At that instant, internet cafes, schools, and even apartment buildings were engulfed by screams. The stream exploded because of the barrage, posts on discussion forums were squeezed onto the next page seconds after they were uploaded, and all of the Weibo topics were filled with "*TTC is badass*"…

With the five-starred national flag wrapped around them, the five pro players lifted their trophy high up into the air, towards the camera, towards the spectators watching from across the world—

The spectators would forever remember this scene.

Under the spotlights, the five TTC members slung their arms around each other's shoulders, laughing and crying.

Their competitive state, the utter devotion and passion for esports visible in their eyes, all of it was a clear announcement—

This was only the beginning.

They would drape this vivid five-starred red flag eternally around their shoulders—

—and bring it all over the world, onto every esports stage.

《I Can Do It》Lu Boyuan x Jian Rong Extras · End

Translation Notes

1. *A zongzi is a glutinous rice 'dumpling' stuffed with different fillings (sweet/savory) and wrapped in bamboo leaves* ^
2. *Sexy Tea is a real bubble tea chain that went viral somewhat recently. People will queue in super long lines to get it!* ^
3. *Slang/acronym for 磕到了 (ke dao le = kdl). Synonymous with 'I'm shipping it.'* ^

Yan: That's the end of the RoadSoft extras! The remaining extras are all for the side ship (Pine x Xiao Bai)~ though I will say this is not the last time you'll see Jian Rong lol. And in case you didn't notice, the part where LBY has JR kabedon'd against the wall... is indeed drawn from the book summary!

Buy me a coffee

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ICDI Extra 3: (Side CP – P-Bai) Shouldn't a young person like you have a lot of body heat?

Thanks to Risey for the Ko-fi!

After TTC accomplished a 2021 grand slam, the extremely excited esports fans waited expectantly in the livestream rooms, hoping for a happy scene like the one that had emerged post-MSI, when all of the TTC members streamed a few days later.

Unfortunately, a week passed, and nothing happened.

Some fans couldn't sit still anymore, and they ran over to question TTC's official Weibo account:

[Your team members haven't been kidnapped because of how much they're constantly flaunting their wealth, right? Even now, nobody's streaming, it doesn't make any sense.]

[Forget everyone else—my son is a model worker for the streaming world! His only dream is to swindle away all of his dads' money, yet he actually stopped streaming for an entire week when his popularity is at its highest?!]

[Xiao Bai is nowhere to be found either T-T I miss seeing him hug P-baby's thigh every day.]

[P-fan here, crying. Judging from these circumstances, it looks like I'll have to wait at least a month before I can see my husband.]

[They should be on break, right? Didn't Bye say in the pre-finals interview that he was going to take his parents traveling after the competition? He probably hasn't gone back to the base yet…]

"*Ss*… I ate too much. This restaurant is pretty good… Yusong.

"Jiang Yusong?"

Pine snapped out of it. He looked up from his phone and glanced at his friend.

He had just left home and returned to Shanghai today when some of his old friends invited him out to dinner in the evening.

"We're gonna go to a bar, wanna come?" The friend patted his shoulder. "Nobody will recognize you with your mask on anyway."

Pine stuffed one hand in his pocket as a cigarette dangled from his mouth. Right as he was about to decline, his phone's preinstalled ringtone suddenly sounded.

He checked the caller ID before he pulled out his hand, removed the cigarette, and answered the call with a lazy "*en*."

A familiar, crisp voice pierced through the tranquil night. "*Wuwuwuwu* P-baby—quick, come and ransom me!!!"

The young man hadn't really spoken the entire night, nor had his expressions fluctuated much. But at that moment, he raised an eyebrow, and though he quickly lowered it again, it was enough to make his close

friend next to him suspect that he was seeing things in the darkness of the night.

Pine exhaled a mouthful of smoke and asked, “Where are you?”

Xiao Bai halted in the middle of tossing out a card. “I’m playing cards in a mahjong and poker place, I’ll send you my location.”

“Who else is there.”

Xiao Bai: “Me, Jian Rong, XIU, and my *ge*.”

Pine paused for a second. “Brothers of the same mind give away money together?”

“BS, I just have bad luck, all my cards are super bad…” Xiao Bai threw out a card and complained, “My *ge*’s not playing, but he keeps peeking at my cards and telling Jian Rong what they are!”

When Lu Boyuan heard that, he laughed from where he was sitting behind Jian Rong. “Who are you trying to slander here? Even if I was peeking, I wouldn’t be looking at your cards, not with your skill level… How much have you two lost to XIU altogether now? Do you still have money in your pockets?”

Jian Rong gripped his cards tightly, pissed to the point of a headache because of the trash cards in his hand. But he insisted on saying stubbornly, “So what if I lose, I have money.”

XIU burst out laughing and shouted towards Xiao Bai's phone, "Your support is the only broke one here. He doesn't have a single coin left in his pocket, and he still owes me twenty-eight *yuan*. Hurry up and get over here to pay it off for him, I'm only accepting cash, okay."

By the time Pine arrived at the mahjong and poker house to fetch Zhuang Yibai, his debt had already soared up to eighty-one *yuan* and forty cents.

The moment Pine opened the door, someone launched themselves at him, and the pleasant, warm fragrance of laundry detergent slipped into his nose.

Xiao Bai hooked one arm around Pine's neck. The distance between them instantaneously decreased, and when Pine lowered his gaze, he could see Xiao Bai's eyelashes.

Zhuang Yibai's eyelashes were long and thick. Because of that, many fans called him an "eyelash spirit."

With the appearance of someone whose bankroller had arrived, Xiao Bai looked back and said to XIU, "Come on come on, my baby's[1] here, how much do I owe you? Just say it!"

XIU: "I'll zero it out for you. Eighty."

Pine averted his eyes as he pulled out his wallet and found a hundred *yuan* bill. "Keep the change."

XIU made a gleeful noise. "Thanks, boss!"

After they left the mahjong and poker house, XIU called a taxi and went back to his base by himself.

It was early December, and Shanghai's wind at night was cold enough to make their bones ache.

Through a thick jacket, Xiao Bai pressed his arm against Pine's as he asked Lu Boyuan, "*Ge*, where'd you park your car?"

Lu Boyuan said, "You guys should call a taxi back."

Jian Rong, who was in the middle of replying to a message from Lu Boyuan's mom, lifted his head silently when he heard that. Then, he stuffed both hands coolly into his pockets.

Xiao Bai instantly raised an eyebrow in understanding. "In that case… I hope you two have a pleasant evening."

Jian Rong: "…Get lost."

Xiao Bai watched their mid laner and jungler walk away shoulder-to-shoulder. He breathed out a mouthful of white mist before he turned his head and saw that Pine was requesting a ride on an app. He quickly reached out and jabbed Pine's phone screen to cancel their spot in line, causing their hands to touch briefly.

Pine allowed Xiao Bai to do as he pleased. He looked over and asked, "What is it?"

“How about we go back a little later?” Xiao Bai rubbed his stomach. “I’m hungry.”

Pine frowned. “Wasn’t there any food in the mahjong and poker house?”

“There was.” Xiao Bai rambled, “But I got too sucked into the game, so I only ate a few bites, and that place didn’t have good food either. Are you hungry… Oh, I forgot that you went out to eat with your friends tonight… Let’s just go back then, I’ll order takeout once we return to the base.”

As Xiao Bai spoke, he reached out to poke at Pine’s phone again.

Then Pine grabbed his hand and moved it away.

Pine exited out of the app and said evenly, “What do you want to eat.”

Xiao Bai: “Didn’t you eat already?”

“I’m not full.”

Xiao Bai’s eyes curved into crescents. “Then *gege* will treat you to that Japanese restaurant across the street! It’s super delicious!”

Pine looked at him quietly for a few seconds. “*Ge* my ass, how old are you again?”

Xiao Bai said proudly, “It doesn’t matter how old I am. In any case, I’ll always be two years older than you.”

Pine huffed out a laugh and turned around. He was about to start walking towards the crosswalk when someone suddenly grabbed onto his right

hand.

Xiao Bai had kept his hand bundled up for quite a while, so it felt warm the moment it bumped against Pine's.

Before Pine could react, Xiao Bai interlocked their fingers and placed Pine's hand into his own jacket pocket.

"I wanted to say this earlier—why's your hand so cold?" Xiao Bai rubbed his fingers against the back of Pine's hand. "Shouldn't a young person like you have a lot of body heat?"

Pine's throat bobbed. Under the glow of the streetlight, his sharp features seemed to soften a bit. He tried to gently tug his hand away, but he was unsuccessful.

Xiao Bai glanced up at the traffic light before he let out an "*ah*" and dragged Pine forward. "Quick, the light's green!"

The heater was on in the Japanese restaurant, so they both shed their jackets and hung them up in the private room's closet.

Xiao Bai sat cross-legged on the ground. As he swallowed a piece of delectable sashimi, he seemed to be completely revived. "Why'd you only go home for a few days this time?"

Pine sipped his tea and stated calmly, "You were too annoying."

He was home for three days. During that time, Zhuang Yibai called him three times per day: in the morning, to ask if he was awake yet; at noon, to

ask if he had eaten yet; and at night, to ask if he had time to play games.

As a result, after he sent his parents off on their flight to their hometown in Yunnan last night, he booked a plane ticket for himself and returned to Shanghai.

"If I had known earlier that I could annoy you into coming back, I would've called you seven times a day. I was about to die of boredom from staying at the base all by myself. My parents are really way too much, they'd rather go traveling with some lousy senior tour group than take their precious son with them… *cough, cough cough*… damn…"

Before Xiao Bai could finish his sentence, he was ruthlessly choked by the wasabi. He covered his mouth with the back of his hand and coughed vigorously as he frantically poured himself some tea, only to discover that the liquid in the teapot was so hot that he couldn't drink it.

He subconsciously extended his hand towards Pine, and a cup of cooled tea was placed into his hand.

Right as Pine was about to bring something to Xiao Bai's attention, he saw the person sitting across from him slot his mouth against the dark, damp spot on the rim of the cup. Then, he tilted his head back and finished off all the tea in one gulp.

Xiao Bai's eyes were red from coughing. After he calmed down, he looked up and complained with teary eyes, "P-baby, this restaurant wants to murder the League of Legends' world champion."

Pine: "."

Pine filled the cup with tea again. “Are you an idiot? You can swallow something the wrong way even when you’re just eating?”

“Is this how you should be talking to your precious support?” Xiao Bai returned the cup to him. “Why aren’t you eating anything?”

Because I’m full.

Pine stared at the sashimi platter in front of them for several seconds before he finally moved his chopsticks and picked up the smallest piece.

Satisfied, Xiao Bai was about to gorge himself when his phone started vibrating on the table.

Xiao Bai checked the caller ID before he answered the call and directly put it on speaker mode. He called out indistinctly, “Mom—”

Mama Zhuang asked, “What are you doing right now?”

“Eating dinner.”

Mama Zhuang let out an “*aiyo*.” “Come back and eat later, you have to hurry up and get to the airport.”

Xiao Bai: “Mom, food is the most important, then comes everything else…”

“Enough with that nonsense.” Mama Zhuang said, “The young lady’s plane is about to land in Shanghai. If you head over now, you’ll still be able to make it in time!”

Pine’s chewing slowed down.

Xiao Bai was also taken aback. “What?”

“I’m talking about Mr. Li’s daughter, the one we introduced to you during New Year’s—”

“That potential blind date?” Xiao Bai frowned. “Mom, I already settled things with her over WeChat. We don’t see eye to eye…”

“What can you possibly settle over WeChat?” Mama Zhuang said resolutely, “In any case, I already told Mr. Li that you were going to meet her at the airport. If you don’t go, the young lady is just going to have to wait there all by herself.”

After the call ended, Xiao Bai heaved an irritated sigh.

“A blind date?”

Xiao Bai raised his head and met Pine’s eyes. “Ah… did I not tell you?

“Who knows what some matchmaker on the street said to my mom, but at the beginning of the year, she insisted that I go on a blind date… Although, that girl was actually pretty easy to persuade. When I told the girl that I didn’t want to date for the time being, she didn’t try to look for me again, so I thought this matter was settled…”

Pine unconsciously tapped his finger against his cup. “What’s she like.”

“I haven’t seen her before, and she didn’t open up her WeChat Moments to me either. But my mom did show me pictures of her, she’s actually quite

pretty." Xiao Bai shook his head and sighed. "Unfortunately, back then I was completely preoccupied with planning for my next thirty years in the LPL…"

"Are you done planning?"

Xiao Bai was caught off guard. "…More or less, probably?"

Pine nodded. "So that means you have time to plan for other things now?"

Xiao Bai blinked, holding his chopsticks. Before he could ask "*my darling ADC, what exactly do you want me to be planning*," his phone chimed again.

[Mom: Arrival time 22:20, Pudong Airport T1. The young lady's number is 1XXXX…]

Xiao Bai lifted his head to check the time and blurted out a "*fuck*."

He remained conflicted for a while, but in the end, he still hastily got to his feet. He tugged down his jacket and slipped it on. "P-baby, you can keep eating, I gotta go to the airport. The plane's going to land in twenty minutes… Take your time, I'll reimburse you later! Order whatever you want! Oh yeah, this restaurant's baked eel is especially yummy, you'll definitely love it. I ordered a serving, so you should give it a try.

"I'm going to the airport now—I don't feel good about letting a young woman be by herself this late at night, I'll be totally responsible if anything happens…"

Xiao Bai slipped on his shoes as he chattered away. Right as he was about to stand up, he realized that someone was holding onto the hood of his jacket.

He turned his head and locked eyes with Pine.

The young man's monolids were lowered slightly, and he wore the same expression as usual—or rather, no expression.

But for a split second, Xiao Bai seemed to catch a glimpse of some deep, veiled emotions that typically wouldn't have been visible.

Startled, Xiao Bai blinked. "What's up?"

Pine didn't speak.

A fur trim lined the hood of Zhuang Yibai's jacket. Just like its owner, it was soft and pale, and it felt very pleasant to touch.

Xiao Bai waited for a while, but his phone went off again.

In the wake of that quiet, crisp noise, Pine let go.

He picked up the scarf that he took off earlier and tossed it to Xiao Bai. "It's cold, wear this on the way over."

The door closed, and the private room—which was still lively and bustling with energy half a minute ago—abruptly cooled down.

Pine lowered his gaze and looked at the vibrant, colorful sashimi on the table. He didn't touch his chopsticks.

Several minutes later, his phone lit up on the table—

[P-Baby's Little Support: P-baby, I'm in the car.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: *Wuwu* my Japanese food—]

[P-Baby's Little Support: It seems that the world's number one support won't be able to aim for the Korean server's top 10 tonight. My mom is insisting that I take the girl out to dinner T-T eat some more, finish my serving for me too!]

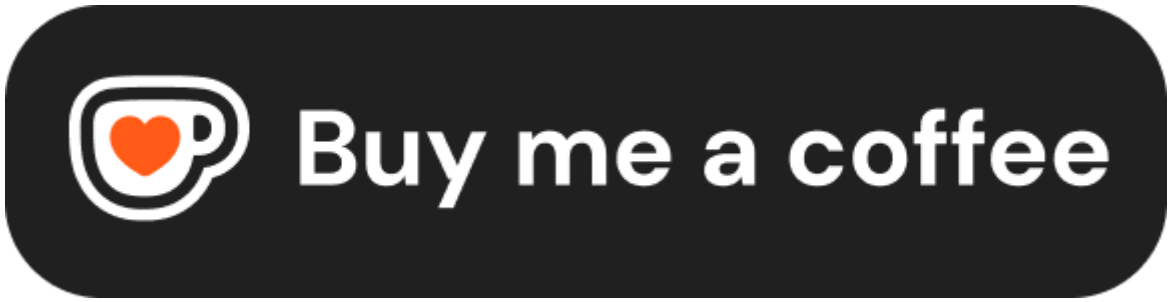
After the other person stopped sending messages and his phone screen turned dark, Pine finally moved.

He braced his hands against his knees and stood up. Then he put on his jacket, left the private room, and went to pay the bill at the front desk, leaving behind a table of exquisite, ice-cold Japanese cuisine.

Translation Notes

1. *He says baobei here (and throughout most of this chapter when he's using endearments).* ^

Yan: Pine... even if you don't want to eat it... all that sashimi... *clutches chest* give it to me



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ICDI Extra 4: (Side CP – P-Bai) Hahahahahahaha! Your ADC doesn't want you anymore!

Thank you to jaybirb, diabolomenth, and Luthien for the Ko-fis!

The blind date partner was a young woman who had just turned twenty, and she was currently attending college in Shanghai.

Xiao Bai had never understood why her family wanted her to go on blind dates when she was only twenty years old. Of course, as his mother put it, she was just trying to "make a friend."

The girl's hair was bound in braided pigtails, and she wore a white down-filled parka, along with a pink and white pleated uniform-type skirt—he had learned what those were during Jian Rong's crossdressing stream.

The girl also scanned him up and down.

He looked pretty similar to his photos, if not a bit skinnier—honestly, Xiao Bai's build couldn't really be considered fat at all. It was just that his face was quite chubby, and he was also especially pale, so he always gave off the impression of being somewhat plump.

Xiao Bai lowered his head and stared at the girl's legs for a few seconds. Right as the girl was feeling shy and started to subconsciously twist her fingers together, he looked up and said, "Young lady, it's five degrees outside in Shanghai today. Aren't you cold with your legs exposed?"

The girl paused briefly. “I’m wearing tights. They’re flesh-colored, so it’s hard to see at night.”

Understanding suddenly dawned on Xiao Bai. “How badass.”

The girl: “…”

Xiao Bai brought the girl to a barbeque place that their team often went to, which was also close to her school.

The girl had spent two hours doing her makeup, and even her lip gloss was applied exquisitely. Now, she stared at the several dozen lamb skewers on the big metal pan in front of her. “…”

Xiao Bai picked up a skewer and discovered that the person across from him wasn’t moving. “Are you not gonna eat?”

“I’m… not super hungry.” The girl said, “I’m not interfering with your practice, am I?”

“I don’t have any practice today.”

Xiao Bai responded perfunctorily. He was still thinking about that table full of Japanese food… and the look in Pine’s eyes when he grabbed onto Xiao Bai’s hood.

Abruptly, he remembered how Pine was initially even more arrogant than their team’s domineering mid laner was when he first joined TTC. For better or worse, Jian Rong would still pay attention to other people—even though it was mostly just so he could insult them.

Meanwhile, Pine completely shut everyone else out of his world.

He ate alone, he climbed alone, he went out alone—apart from when they had to practice together, he rarely talked to anyone else.

Zhuang Yibai, who was naturally lively and vivacious, had a hard time understanding this type of person.

Therefore, he decided to try and deepen his understanding.

As the bot lane duo, they were the two people who needed to work on their rapport and teamwork the most in the team. So he got close to him, he took the initiative, he forcefully burst his way into Pine's world.

"*Gege*? Did you hear me?"

Xiao Bai pulled himself out of his thoughts and realized that the girl was looking at him, head tilted. "Sorry, what were you saying?"

As a result, the girl repeated her words again. "What do you usually do when you're not in practice?"

Xiao Bai: "Play LoL."

The girl: "…Isn't that the same thing as practice?"

"It's different. In practice, we have to play in high tiers or we have practice matches, and we can't play other roles, but when we're not in training, we can play whatever we want. I often go smurfing with P… with my teammate—which means we go play in the lower tiers. We can also switch up our roles and prioritize having fun."

The girl didn't get it. "Aren't you still playing games though? Won't you get bored?"

Xiao Bai was also baffled. "Why would I get bored?"

Right as he said that, his phone suddenly chimed in his pocket.

One of his former stream moderators was texting him. The young woman had been a mod for him for two years before she got promoted in the first half of this year, but they still remained friends with each other.

[Mod-*jiejie*: Bai!!!!]

[Mod-*jiejie*: What are you doing right now?!]

[Mod-*jiejie*: Hello?]

With the way she was acting, Zhuang Yibai couldn't help but suspect that his stream had been banned for 999 years.

[P-Baby's Little Support: I'm here.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: I'm eating barbeque outside, what's wrong? Did my stream explode?!]

[Mod-*jiejie*: No.]

Xiao Bai let out a sigh of relief.

[Mod-*jiejie*: It's ten thousand times more serious than that, okay?! Jiang Yusong is having an affair!!! And yet you're still out here eating barbeque!!!!]

He sucked that breath of air right back in.

[P-Baby's Little Support: What do you mean?]

[Mod-*jiejie*: P-baby is streaming while gaming.]

[P-Baby's Little Support: Oh, he's streaming? He didn't even tell me.]

[Mod-*jiejie*: Mn.]

[Mod-*jiejie*: He's duo queuing with a female accompanying gamer, why would he tell you?]

Xiao Bai was startled for a few seconds before he immediately snorted.

If it wasn't for the fact that he knew that Pine's duo queue car was even harder to get into than Tsinghua or Peking University, he would've almost believed her.

Never mind his duo queue car, Pine barely even added many friends in the game. In the past, when Commentator A wanted to add Pine as a friend to spectate, he had to send him messages for a week straight. Actively seeking out an accompanying gamer was even more absurd……

"What kind of ADC does Boss like to play?

"Boss, is my voice too loud?

"Boss, can I play Yuumi?"

The immensely popular streamer finally stirred, but only so that he could reply with a muffled "*en*." However, that sound was enough to solidify his

identity—it was, for sure, Pine himself.

“Okay Boss, I’m gonna pick her then!”

Xiao Bai lowered his head and stared at the StarTV app on his phone. His face ached from being slapped.

Pine was indeed streaming, and he was also indeed duo queuing with a female accompanying gamer.

The female accompanying gamer was ranked very highly in the game, so she was able to duo queue with Pine’s Grandmaster account. Her voice was also the mature type; everything she said was flavored with a lazy, coquettish overtone.

The blind date girl also heard the accompanying gamer’s voice, and her expression changed subtly.

Xiao Bai knew that it wasn’t very appropriate to watch a stream in this sort of setting, so he shifted his finger—and turned down the sound.

Pine’s camera wasn’t on, and he was more silent than usual. The female accompanying gamer was the one speaking most of the time.

She was very professional. Even with this kind of boss, she didn’t let things get awkward as she kept the atmosphere going all by herself. Every once in a while, Pine would say something, but it was only either “*forward*” or “*retreat*.”

Xiao Bai was watching the stream on his side account. The barrage was full of comments like—

[Everyone, welcome to the scene of a major affair.]

[Traitorous man, why aren't you turning your camera on?]

[Where's Bai where's Bai where's Bai where's Bai? Why don't I hear his voice in the background either?]

[Calm down a little, okay? This is Pine's stream. Give the accompanying gamer a bit of face, joke around appropriately.]

[It's obvious that Pine and Bye are just really good friends. It can't be that some people actually believe they're a couple, right?]

[Bye is a straight guy. He used to watch female streamers all the time in the past.]

[I'm just confused… Doufu, 98k, and the other pro players also frequently stream with female accompanying gamers, so what's the big deal if Pine occasionally does it too? Don't curse at the accompanying gamer, don't stir up drama.]

Xiao Bai's mouth hung open slightly, and he felt somewhat enlightened.

That's right—it was common for guys to seek out female accompanying gamers. Why did he think that it was impossible when it came to Pine?

Pine was twenty-one this year. Of course he would want to play games with girls; he would even want to start dating one day…

Xiao Bai leaned back in his chair and couldn't help but mutter to himself internally as he stared at one of the comments flying by in the barrage.

It was true that he was straight, but he only went to watch the female streamers in order to study how they streamed… He didn't have any other intentions at all.

Xiao Bai spotted the stream's start time at the top of the screen, and he was a little taken aback.

Pine's stream had started at 22:27.

If Xiao Bai was remembering correctly, he himself left the restaurant at exactly ten o'clock. It took at least twenty minutes to get from the restaurant back to their base, which meant… not long after he left, Pine had departed as well.

Then what about that table of Japanese cuisine? Did he pack it up and take it back to the base?

"How come you're not eating anymore either?"

Xiao Bai lifted his head and looked at the skewers in front of him. Suddenly, he found that he had lost his appetite. He remained silent for quite a few seconds before he finally said, "I ate some Japanese food before I got to the airport, I can't really eat much more."

"Won't this be a bit of a waste then?" The girl was momentarily surprised before she suggested, "Maybe you could take it to-go and bring it back to the base for your teammates?"

Xiao Bai nodded. “Okay.”

The girl raised her hand and called the server over. “Pack all of this up in a to-go box.”

Xiao Bai said to the server, “Could I order another twenty lamb skewers, ten beef skewers, and a serving of pig brain? Make it extra spicy, and pack it all up for take-out too. Please wrap it up in aluminum foil, thank you.”

The girl’s eyes widened. “Do you have a lot of teammates at the base?”

“No, just one. All the others are out on dates.” Xiao Bai laughed. “But my teammate prefers it when cooked food is hot. These skewers are too cold, he won’t touch them.”

After Xiao Bai sent the girl back to her school, he immediately turned and called a taxi to go home.

He sat in the middle of the back row and propped a hand against the driver’s seat. “Sir, if you don’t mind, could you drive a little faster? The speed limit is sixty here, your forty-five is a bit too slow.”

The driver stepped on the gas. “Okey-dokey, are you in a rush?”

“Yeah.” Xiao Bai said anxiously, “Any longer and my barbeque take-out is gonna get cold!”

The driver: “…”

Back at the base, Xiao Bai touched the aluminum foil. Thankfully, it was still hot.

Even though the window was open in the practice room, the smell of cigarette smoke still filled the air, and only the sound of tapping keys and a clicking mouse could be heard. The young man sat quietly in front of the computer as he controlled his character in the game without saying a single word. He hadn't changed out of his casual clothes yet, and his bangs were somewhat messy. The ashtray next to his keyboard was full of cigarette butts.

The first time they met, Pine also looked just like this.

Pine entered the team through tryouts. At the beginning, he didn't practice in the same place as the members from the first team. As a result, late at night after the first day of the tryouts, Xiao Bai stealthily crept downstairs to take a peek at him.

Back then, Pine was skinnier than he was now. He had on a thin white short-sleeved T-shirt, and the dim practice room only contained him, the sounds from his computer, and wafting cigarette smoke.

"Lonely" was Xiao Bai's first impression of him.

The window behind Pine's computer was half-open, and the cold wind was a painful scrape against skin.

After winning a team fight, Pine listened to the female accompanying gamer compliment him in his headphones as he picked up his cigarette box, wanting to have another smoke. Suddenly, someone's palm cupped his chin, and he complied with the force exerted by the owner of the hand as he tilted his head back, meeting Zhuang Yibai's eyes.

“Your face is so chilly, yet you’re still keeping the window open?” Xiao Bai frowned. His hand shifted upwards, and he rubbed Pine’s cheeks with the back of his hand. “Aren’t you cold?”

Pine put the cigarette back. “No.”

Xiao Bai brushed Pine’s neck and sucked in a breath of air through his teeth. “You’re so freaking cold.”

He shed his scarf and wrapped it around Pine before he turned to close the window. “I saw that you started streaming at 10:30. Did you not eat any of the Japanese food? Was it not to your taste? Why didn’t you pack it up and bring it back, what a waste.”

Pine silently tried to come up with an excuse. Before he could find one, Xiao Bai lifted the bag in his hand and said, pleased with himself, “But it’s okay, *gege* brought you some barbeque.”

Pine: “…”

“I told the owner to wrap it in aluminum foil, so it’s still hot.” Xiao Bai paused. “What, do you not want it?”

Pine: “I do want it.”

Satisfied, Xiao Bai praised himself internally for thinking on his feet and ordering take-out. “I’ll go get a plate from the kitchen to put the skewers on, for convenience.”

Xiao Bai put his phone down on Pine's computer desk and picked up the barbeque. As he was walking away, he heard the female accompanying gamer's voice float out from the headphones that Pine had just removed, and he stopped in place again.

He pressed his lips together. A long moment later, he glanced back and asked tentatively, "Then, once I bring the skewers back… we can eat and duo queue together at the same time?"

Pine looked at his ears, which were completely red from the cold, and said, "Okay."

Xiao Bai hummed as he walked out of the practice room.

Several seconds passed before Pine withdrew his gaze.

During their short conversation, the enemy team had already chosen to surrender. The game ended, and the computer screen returned to the lobby.

The stream was filled with comments about Xiao Bai. Pine didn't typically respond to the barrage, but when he checked on it casually, he just happened to see the following comment: [This little brat Zhuang Yibai is actually pretty good at doting on people.]

"Boss, you're really super strong, even stronger than a pro player… When I play games with you, I feel like I'm hugging your thigh and getting carried, haha~" The female accompanying gamer laughed and said, "Should I be paying you a booster fee?"

Pine focused his gaze back on the game. Ding-*ge* had accepted a sponsorship from a standard accompanying gamer platform for him, and this female accompanying gamer was specially arranged by the company. Of course she knew that he was a pro player; all of this flattery was merely for show.

Pine said, "No need."

"Heehee, in that case, thank you for carrying me Boss. *Mwah mwah~*"

Pine moved his mouse over to the button that would let him leave the party. "Mn. Tonight, let's just…"

The phone on the table vibrated. Pine glanced down at it—it was Xiao Bai's phone, and the lock screen wallpaper was a photo that he had forced Pine into taking with him by hooking an arm around his neck.

[Munching Hamster: *Gege* I'm back at my dorm~]

[Munching Hamster: Actually, before we met, I had already watched your competitions. Even though I don't understand the game, you're really very adorable and handsome on the stage. Next time we see each other, let me treat you to a meal instead…]

[Munching Hamster: Thank you for sending me back to my school ^^]

Xiao Bai came back, still humming, still out of tune. "P-baby, do you wanna drink Coke or Sprite? That damn bluenette put the Coke in the fridge, so it's a little cold. Maybe you should drink the Sprite?"

“Either’s fine.” Pine picked up Xiao Bai’s phone and handed it to him. “You got a message.”

When he saw Xiao Bai smile as he typed back a response, Pine aimlessly swirled his mouse around before he muted himself.

“How was it?”

Xiao Bai’s eyes remained fixed on his phone. “What?”

Pine said, “That girl.”

Xiao Bai moved his phone away and glanced at him with an enigmatic expression on his face. “This was my first time meeting a girl who looks better in real life than in pictures.”

“Congrats then.”

Xiao Bai continued to text back, though his mouth twitched to the side when Pine said that. “But how do I put this, she and I…”

Pine interrupted him and said, “She called you *gege*.”

Xiao Bai didn’t pay too much attention to the tone of Pine’s voice. “Yeah, since she’s younger than me! She’s only twenty years old.”

After Xiao Bai was done replying, he lowered his phone. “Okay, I’ll log in now…”

Upon seeing the game interface on Pine’s computer monitor, Xiao Bai was taken aback. “Why did you start another game? Didn’t you agree to duo

queue with me?”

“Not anymore.” Pine bought some items and left the base. “I’m going to play with her for a while longer, you can go play by yourself.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

Xiao Bai: “Are you going back on your word?”

Pine said, “Mn.”

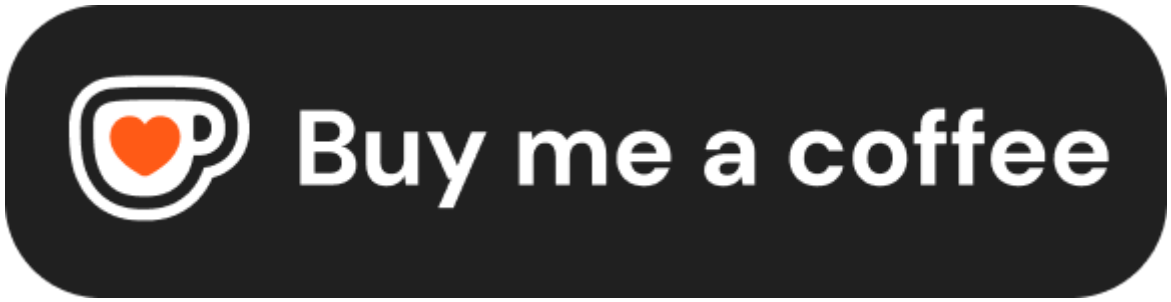
Xiao Bai sat down in his chair, turned on his computer, and logged into the game. In his mind, he secretly vowed that if Jiang Yusong didn’t coax him for three days and three nights after this, he was never going to duo queue with that untrustworthy scumbag again.

If Pine didn’t wanna play, fine! Grandpa could solo queue on his own!

With quite the backbone, he clicked on the ‘ranked’ button. Just as he was about to enter the solo queue, a chat popped up right in his face—

[XIU: Hahahahahahaha! Your ADC doesn’t want you anymore!]

Yan: Tiny Salt is hosting a two-winner giveaway for a book of choice from MXTX’s three English novel releases! See the announcement channel in our discord to learn more + enter ☺ Giveaway ends August 12 at 10 PM GMT-5!



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ICDI Extra 5: (Side CP – P-Bai) Don't sell rot on purpose anymore.

Thank you to riingo, Kitty, and juuree for the Ko-fis!

The self-proclaimed most unbreakable man in the world was stabbed in the heart by that message.

[Bye: …You're watching his stream?]

[XIU: Our ADC is watching, he put it on speaker.]

[XIU: It's fine, don't be sad. If Pine is gaming with girls, you can also game with girls.]

Zhuang Yibai replied with a dry "*haha*."

A party invite appeared.

[XIU: Come on, join my lobby, I just happen to be short one person.]

[Bye: Why are there four people in the party?]

[XIU: I invited three accompanying gamer sisters, get in the car so we can take off!]

After a bit of contemplation, Zhuang Yibai ended up joining the party.

The accompanying gamers that XIU invited all had very pleasant voices. Their calls of "*Bai–ge*" and "*world's number one support*" were extremely

sweet.

Then Zhuang Yibai picked Darius and went to be an orphan in the top lane.

Xiao Bai idled in the brush and waited for the enemy top laner to get in lane. His camera focus in the game kept wandering around randomly.

If his internal muttering could be heard out loud, Jiang Yusong would've probably been annoyed to death by now.

—Why isn't this ADC eating the skewers I brought back?

—Is playing with an accompanying gamer more important than my skewers?

—In the end, all this doting and cherishing that Grandpa invested over the years was for nothing.

Several minutes later, after confirming that Pine's attention couldn't be diverted because he was in the middle of a team fight, Xiao Bai furtively snuck back into the stream on his side account.

The accompanying gamer was still diligently holding an awkward, one-sided conversation.

"He dares to touch my ADC, how despicable~ I'll definitely help avenge you!

"Ahhh Boss, run for it, their jungler is here! Oh no, we won't be able to escape… we can fight! Counter-kill! Nice~ Boss, you're so strong, you're the most powerful boss I've ever met~

“Boss, won’t you consider going pro? Can I reserve an autograph in advance? I’m going to be your number one fangirl!

“Boss, wait for me, I have three seconds left before I revive~”

Zhuang Yibai couldn’t help himself, and he switched screens to go look at the stream.

Pine didn’t say anything, but his Ezreal stopped in place. The accompanying gamer replied with a sugary “*thank you Boss*” before she controlled Yuumi to sit on Pine’s shoulder.

By the time Xiao Bai switched back to the game, he had been solo killed by the enemy Riven.

XIU’s three accompanying gamers weren’t ranked very high, but they were quite skilled at chatting. The voice chat was filled with cries of laughter, while the other accompanying gamer’s glowing flattery resounded through Pine’s stream; only Zhuang Yibai walked alone on the path to getting thrashed in the top lane.

In the first place, their team was one that was created for fun. On top of that, he kept getting distracted, and his top lane didn’t have the advantage a single time out of the three games he played. Their team continuously lost.

Meanwhile, that scumbag next door had already won four ranked games in a row.

XIU said shadily, “Bro, was your top lane always this good?”

Xiao Bai: “My bad, I’m screwing us over today.”

XIU: “It’s fine, it’s just a normal game… but you seem to be a little silent tonight. What’s up, not happy about losing at cards? Didn’t your bankroller help settle your debt for you?”

Xiao Bai was about to speak when XIU added cheerfully, “Though your bankroller is currently spending his money on someone else right now.”

Xiao Bai: “…”

One of the female accompanying gamers in the team said in surprise, “Ah… are Bai-*ge* and Pine real?!”

If this was any other time, perhaps Zhuang Yibai would’ve replied, “*Yeah, his child is already in my stomach*.”

The sound of a flash came from the stream, followed by: “*Wuwu* Boss actually flashed to save me, the man of my dreams is here… Boss, I’ll give you an extra hour for free, so let’s play for a little longer together?”

Pine: “Mn.”

“Impossible, I’m completely straight, okay?” Xiao Bai pursed his lips and said to his team, “We’re just teammates who have a pretty good relationship with one another.”

Pine missed a siege minion. He stood in place, expressionless, for several seconds before he flashed and killed the enemy ADC to make up for the gold loss from the minion.

“Boss is so fierce~” The accompanying gamer said, “Boss, how about we add each other on WeChat first? You can find me whenever you need me in the future, I’ll decline my other bosses to come play with you.”

Pine: “Mn.”

After the game ended, Xiao Bai stared at the large “*defeat*” written on the screen and his own score of 1/10/3. His mind was filled with thoughts like “*I’m so trash, how can I produce this kind of KDA, am I useless, maybe I should just retire tomorrow, it’s not like there’s anyone or anything worth staying for in this team anymore, the ADC I spent so many years raising is already being a dog for someone else now, what exactly is the point of me remaining in this base”*…… and so on.

XIU also overheard Pine’s exchange with the accompanying gamer from his ADC’s speakers. “How strange. In the past, whenever I saw female fans ask Pine for a signature backstage, he would never agree. But now he’s even adding a female accompanying gamer on WeChat… are the TTC fans about to get another sister-in-law?”

Zhuang Yibai tossed out an “*I’m done, I’m logging off*” before he exited the game.

Tonight wasn’t suited for gaming. The sooner he went to bed, the sooner his mood would improve.

As Xiao Bai stood up, he pretended to glance to the side by accident.

Pine had already taken off the scarf. He was on his phone, in the middle of accepting the accompanying gamer’s WeChat friend request. Xiao Bai’s

eyesight was good, so he was able to spot the young woman's selfie profile picture: it was a close-up of her delicate and beautiful face.

He also saw the young woman send Pine a cutesy emoticon via direct message.

Zhuang Yibai resisted the urge to stop behind Pine and peek at the type of private conversation he might be having with the young woman. In a carefree, callous manner, Xiao Bai turned around and left the practice room.

The door closed, and the practice room went quiet.

Pine stared blankly at the scoreboard for a few seconds. Then, he got up and reopened the window in front of him before he pulled out a cigarette and lit it.

The female accompanying gamer sent him another message: [God P~ this is the style I usually have when I'm keeping people company, is it too noisy for you?]

Pine bit down on his cigarette and typed lazily: [No]

The female accompanying gamer: [That's good, are we going to continue?]

Pine checked the total amount of time they had spent duo queuing together so far. He still had two hours left before he could fulfill the task that the accompanying gamer platform had given him.

He might as well get it all over with tonight and be done with it.

He didn't reply to her. Instead, he directly moved his fingers and entered the queue again.

A moment later, he picked up a skewer—which had been carefully delivered to him by a certain someone and was already completely cold at this point—and silently stuffed it into his mouth.

—

Xiao Bai's hand was sore upon waking up the next day. When he turned his head, he saw that he had slept with his phone cradled in his hand the entire night.

He had fallen asleep while watching the stream.

He rubbed his eyes and glanced at the time Pine went offline. The person who used to find it bothersome to stream for more than three hours had stayed online all the way until 3:30 in the morning last night.

Zhuang Yibai was well-known for being happy-go-lucky. No matter what was on his mind, it would more or less pass after a night of sleep. Just like when Kan had been kicked off the team for matchfixing—the first day Xiao Bai found out about it, it was as if he had been possessed by the god of dejection. But the next day, he revived with full health and started preparing to face the new competitive season—

However, this time, he still felt like the sky was gray even after waking up.

He stared at himself in the mirror and clenched his teeth while he was brushing them. He thought, *It's definitely because Jiang Yusong didn't eat*

the skewers that I went through so much trouble to bring back, and he also canceled on duo queuing with me. That must be why he was feeling so annoyed.

He heard some noises coming from the first floor when he walked out of his room, so he stretched forward and peered downstairs.

Pine and Ding-*ge* were sitting on the living room sofa as they conversed quietly about something.

By the time Xiao Bai got down there, he heard Ding-*ge* say, "Think it over carefully." Then Ding-*ge* reached out and patted Pine's shoulder.

Ding-*ge* saw Xiao Bai come downstairs, and he instructed him to stream whenever he was free to fill up the monthly quota. After that, Ding-*ge* quickly left. They were still on break, but every team's management was always busy at the end of the year. Ding-*ge* was planning on stepping down from being a coach so that he could concentrate on running operations for the team instead, and he was currently holding discussions with a few experienced, veteran coaches.

After Ding-*ge* left, Pine stood up from the sofa and asked Xiao Bai, "Do you want to eat breakfast?"

Xiao Bai was briefly caught off guard. He thought, *We're not on speaking terms right now, okay? I still haven't cooled off from yesterday*.

"Auntie isn't here, so I'll make it for you." Pine stopped next to him. "Or do you want to order takeout?"

Xiao Bai: “You make it for me.”

As he ate Pine’s tomato and egg noodles, Xiao Bai felt like he could just maybe forgive him a tiny bit.

He swallowed down a mouthful of noodles. “What was Ding-*ge* telling you to think over earlier?”

“Nothing.” Pine had monolids, and when he was expressionless, he always appeared to be coldly indifferent—and handsome.

After talking to Pine a little, Zhuang Yibai’s flicker of moodiness seemed to vanish entirely. Actually, when he thought about it some more, none of it was really a big deal. Didn’t Pine just hire an accompanying gamer? Didn’t he just cancel on Xiao Bai for playing ranked together? As if Jian Rong hadn’t canceled on Xiao Bai numerous times in the past?

Zhuang Yibai finished justifying the situation to himself and set down his chopsticks. He casually wiped his mouth before he leaned over so that his face was near Pine’s. “Jiang Yusong, look at the area underneath my eyes.”

The young man paused in the middle of eating after his name was called, and he looked up at Xiao Bai.

Pine’s eyelids were very thin, and his eyes were pitch-black. No person or object seemed to ever truly fill those eyes. Every once in a while, a few specks of light would glimmer in his gaze, rare but radiant.

Zhuang Yibai was startled by Pine’s gaze. His heart, which had been maintaining a steady beat since he woke up, started to thump wildly for

some inexplicable reason.

Pine asked, “I’m looking, what about it?”

Xiao Bai abruptly snapped out of it and swallowed almost imperceptibly. “Don’t – don’t you see my dark circles?”

Pine said, “No, it’s very pale.”

“…” Xiao Bai paused. “Anyway, I didn’t sleep well last night.”

Pine raised an eyebrow.

Xiao Bai declared, “Because you let down my skewers, and you canceled on duo queuing with me for someone else.”

At that, Pine recalled the cold, dried out midnight snack he had eaten yesterday night.

“You don’t know how pitiful I was last night.” Xiao Bai listed out all the ways he had been wronged. “I kept losing at cards; I was finally able to eat Japanese food, but then my mom forced me to go pick someone up from the airport; I didn’t even chat a lot with the girl for the sake of bringing you a steaming hot midnight snack, and I had to urge the taxi driver to re-enact *Fast and Furious* the entire way over; back at the base, you paid no attention at all to my love-filled midnight snack and canceled on my duo queue. Even XIU mocked me, he said that you abandoned me…”

When Pine saw Xiao Bai’s expression growing more aggrieved the longer he talked, his brows furrowed before quickly unfurrowing again. In the end, he

said, “Yesterday’s skewers…”

A phone ringtone interrupted their conversation.

Pine glanced at the source of the noise. Zhuang Yibai’s phone displayed the incoming caller ID, which was “Cangshu[1].”

Xiao Bai told him, “Hold on,” and answered the call.

“Hello?

“I woke up early, I usually wake up pretty early when I don’t have practice… Today? I’m free, what’s up.

“The amusement park?”

Xiao Bai was taken aback. At first, he wanted to refuse, but then he lifted his head and saw Pine leaning back in his chair, looking at him with crossed arms.

All of a sudden, Xiao Bai remembered that even though he had known Pine for such a long time, they had never gone to an entertainment-type place together before.

Xiao Bai hesitated for a moment and asked, “How many people are going with you?

“One of your best friends? Then can I also bring a friend with me… a guy, my teammate.”

Upon receiving a response, Xiao Bai smiled and said, “Okay, that works. Two o’clock? Okay… see you in the afternoon.”

After hanging up, Xiao Bai said animatedly, “P-baby, let’s go out to play today.”

Pine was quiet for several seconds. “Who called you?”

“Cangshu.” Xiao Bai paused and explained, “The girl I went to pick up from the airport yesterday. She said someone gave her some VIP tickets with front-of-the-line access, so she invited me out to the amusement park.”

Pine nodded before he picked up his bowl and chopsticks and got up.

Xiao Bai also stood up. “What were you saying earlier? Something about yesterday’s skewers?”

Pine put the tableware into the sink, turned around, and started to head upstairs. “It’s nothing.”

“Oh.” Xiao Bai followed after him. Pine was walking somewhat fast, so Xiao Bai had to jog a little in order to catch up.

Out of habit, he raised his arm and draped it around Pine’s neck as he glanced at the clock on the wall. “It takes half an hour to get from here to their school. How about you change clothes, and then we can leave?”

“I never said I was going.”

Astonished, Xiao Bai quickly said, “Why not? You don’t want to go? Didn’t you tell me that you’ve never gone to the amusement park before? *Gege*

will take you there to play now… The scenery is good there, we can also ask someone to take a picture of us. It's about time that I change my Weibo cover photo and phone lock screen anyway…"

This entire time, Xiao Bai's Weibo cover photo and lock screen was a picture of him and Pine.

At the beginning, he switched it because he thought the picture turned out nice, but he never ended up changing it.

Pine suddenly stopped walking, and Xiao Bai also came to a halt.

Pine asked, "Why should I go with you on your date?"

Xiao Bai was dumbfounded. "This… doesn't count as a date. We're just going out to have fun together…"

"It's true that you should change your Weibo cover photo and lock screen." Pine said flatly, "You're already going on blind dates, why are you still using a photo of me?"

Xiao Bai was bewildered by the question. "Because the photo looks pretty nice. Also, doesn't the picture have a great effect? It lures in so many fans…"

Pine cut him off. "I don't need that kind of fan."

Xiao Bai: "…"

"I didn't need them before, and I don't need them now." Pine said tonelessly, "Don't sell rot on purpose anymore. Just concentrate on performing well in matches from now on."

Xiao Bai was at a complete loss because of Pine's words.

It took him a while to find his voice again. "Haven't I always been performing well in matches? What's the matter with you? I thought you didn't care about this in the past…"

"Now I do.

"I don't want to help you put on a show anymore."

Xiao Bai's heart sank; he couldn't really describe his current emotions. "Why are you venting your morning grumpiness on me…"

"I'm not." Pine turned to look at him as he said calmly, "You don't need to use this kind of method to attract fans anymore either, do you?"

Xiao Bai was silent.

Actually, at the start, he had never truly intended to gain fans in such a manner. He just purely thought that it was amusing—it was very fun to tease Pine, and it was also very fun to see Pine occasionally reveal a helpless expression.

Why wouldn't he do something that was both amusing and beneficial?

"And you should change your WeChat name too." Pine said, "With a username like that, what girl would want to date you?"

Xiao Bai's throat felt somewhat dry. "It doesn't matter, it's not like I'm dating anyone right now…"

“You will eventually.”

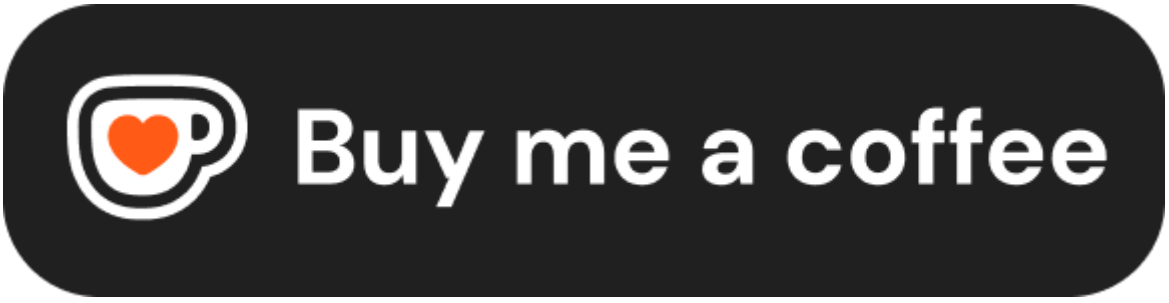
Pine grabbed Xiao Bai’s hand and removed it from his neck.

This was the first time Pine had ever cast his hand away. Frozen in place, Xiao Bai stared at him blankly.

“Go ahead, don’t make her wait.” Pine patted his shoulder. As if he was talking to one of their other teammates, he encouraged Xiao Bai casually, “Have fun.”

Translation Notes

1. *The nickname of Xiao Bai’s blind date is literally Hamster, but because that sounds kinda dumb translated, I’ll just refer to her as Cangshu. (Like Shiliu, Jian Rong’s friend)* ^



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ICDI Extra 6: (Side CP – P-Bai) “Jiang Yusong, you’re not human.”

Thanks to Tty for the Ko-fi!

The air at the amusement park was filled with the sweet scent of cotton candy.

Children held their mothers’ hands, faces filled with happiness and candy clenched in their fists; people of the same age walked alongside one another, laughing cheerfully; couples snuggled intimately together, and some of them were even brazenly kissing and nipping at each other’s ears as if nobody was around them…

The entire world seemed to be having a grand time. Only Zhuang Yibai sat on the bench, spacing out, with both hands stuffed in the pockets of his thick down-filled parka.

He stared at the bright Ferris wheel glittering in the distance as Pine’s words from earlier that day kept drifting through his mind.

Why didn’t he want to play pretend anymore? Even if it was all just for show at the beginning, didn’t it become routine later on? Also, setting a photo of them with their arms wrapped around each other’s shoulders as his lock screen wallpaper was also something that really close friends would do.

Ignore how Zhuang Yibai was currently firing back retort after retort in his mind—when he was standing in front of Jiang Yusong, he couldn't say a damn thing.

He attempted to analyze whether Jiang Yusong was angry or not. He thought about it for a long time, but… Jiang Yusong seemed to have never gotten mad at him before. Sometimes when Xiao Bai annoyed him by pestering him too much, he would merely frown before quickly returning to normal.

What's more… Jiang Yusong didn't have a reason to be angry, did he?

Xiao Bai slumped against the bench with his head tilted back as he exhaled a mouthful of white mist towards the sky. Then he grabbed his phone and held it up in front of him before he opened up the StarTV app and entered Pine's stream.

The screen was completely dark. Pine wasn't online.

Since he wasn't streaming anyway, why didn't he come to the amusement park with Xiao Bai.

"*Gege*."

Xiao Bai slowly lifted his head. Still maintaining that same paralyzed salted fish posture, he peered at the two cute petite girls in front of him. "Done already? That was fast."

"It's because we didn't need to line up." The girl blinked. "We want to go on the pirate ship next, you…"

“I’m okay, you two go ahead.” Xiao Bai immediately said, “I’ll continue looking after your bags.”

A little disappointed, the girl let out an “*ah*.” “You really don’t want to come?”

Her close friend couldn’t take it any longer. “If you don’t want to do anything, then why did you even agree to come to the amusement park with Cangshu?”

Actually, Xiao Bai was intending to back out…

He originally wanted to call her and let her know, but then her message unexpectedly popped up saying that they had already left the school and were waiting for him at a milk tea shop nearby.

As a result, he had no choice but to go over with the mindset of being their chauffeur.

This was the same person who was just badgering Jiang Yusong to go bungee jumping together not too long ago. Now, he said without batting an eye, “Sorry, I’m afraid of heights.”

The two girls still had a relatively good time. Since they could skip the lines, they went on all the big famous rides in the amusement park. By the time they finished playing to their hearts’ content, it was already seven in the evening.

They randomly grabbed something to eat for dinner and rushed over to the castle before it was time for the park’s fireworks show.

As expected, it was very crowded in front of the castle. Xiao Bai stood behind the two girls and blocked them from the throngs of people in the back as he absent-mindedly listened to their conversation.

It was true that he was listening, but nothing they said sunk in.

Everyone around him lifted their phones high up in the air. Only he stuck out like a sore thumb.

There was a sudden tug on his clothing as the girl reminded him, “It’s about to start—”

Bang—

Several fireworks streaked into the sky from various places in the castle and exploded in a riot of colors in Zhuang Yibai’s vision.

He stared up in a daze. A few seconds later, he also copied the crowd and tugged out his phone.

Zhuang Yibai hit the shutter button quite a few times in a row, snapping over a dozen photos.

After he was done, he opened WeChat and clicked on the chat that he used the most frequently. He carefully and meticulously selected five pictures out of a dozen or so nearly identical ones, only to pause the moment before he hit send.

His WeChat username was still the same as before, so if he sought out Jiang Yusong now, it seemed to be a little… humiliating.

It's just because I haven't come up with a cool, mind-blowing WeChat username yet. I'm definitely not shamelessly refusing to change it, he thought.

Xiao Bai exited the photo transfer screen, and a past conversation between him and Pine appeared in the chat. Whenever they texted, Xiao Bai was the one who tended to talk more, and he also sent longer messages; Pine's replies were brief to the point that it made him seem like some high-level executive. However, every text that Xiao Bai sent would always receive a response.

Conflicted, Zhuang Yibai stayed in the chat for some time before he finally ended up hitting the back button. He still had an intense urge to send the pictures to someone, so he decided to simply select a random person from his friends list before he sent all of the photos over at once.

The other person actually answered very quickly.

[R-ong: ?]

[R-ong: Did you send this to the wrong person?]

[P-Baby's Little Support: No, I just wanted to share this beautiful scene with my good friend.]

[R-ong: I'm not interested, don't do this again in the future.]

Xiao Bai: "…"

Did the fireworks fly into my head and blow it up? Why did I send such pretty photos to a guy like that?

After the fireworks show ended, the two girls said that they weren't full from dinner—the food inside the amusement park was both expensive and unappetizing.

They found a random Haidilao to eat at.

The girls conversed enthusiastically with each other while Xiao Bai cooked his duck intestines, lost in thought until someone suddenly called his name —

"Bai-*ge*." Cangshu's friend scooted closer to the table and looked at him eagerly. "Could I ask you about something?"

Xiao Bai: "Mn? About what?"

"About the LoL transfer window, of course." The girl's eyes curved. "I'm actually a PUD fan… I wanted to ask, is XIU-*ge* going to retire this year? 98k should be renewing his contract with PUD, right? Is anything going to change with the bot lane?"

The LoL transfer window typically started in mid-November and lasted for a month. During the transfer period, professional esports players could move from one club to another, and the officials would also open up the system for handling related registration procedures.

But half a month had already passed without any change in the bigger clubs. The irrelevant substitute second teams had announced a few new

members, but it didn't cause too much of a stir. The major news that everyone wanted to know was still being suppressed by the clubs, who were all waiting to throw out their bombshells near the end of the transfer window.

"…I can't really talk about it if their club hasn't even made it public yet." Xiao Bai paused. "But there is something I can tell you. XIU-*ge* isn't going to retire, he wants to play for another year."

"XIU, badass!" The girl happily took a gulp of her plum juice before she continued gossiping. "Road said that he wasn't going to retire during the finals interview, so he should be staying in TTC; your contract with TTC isn't up yet, and neither is Qian's… What about Soft? He only signed with TTC for one season, right? I heard that a ton of clubs are all trying to negotiate with him!"

Xiao Bai raised an eyebrow and laughed.

That was certainly true. Apart from PUD, every single club that had a bit of money had ended up moseying over to their mid laner. As far as he was aware, the highest price offered was already up around thirty million *yuan*.

For a pro gamer that had just started his career a year ago, this was sky-high. Even though Fu-*ge*'s offer wasn't low either, it still fell a little short of the highest bid… After all, many clubs were backed by large corporations who were all hoping that Jian Rong could give their teams attention, popularity, and achievements.

But it was useless.

So what if they had money? Their God Jian didn't lack money; he only wanted a certain person.

The girl somewhat understood from his reaction. She nodded and murmured, "That means only TTC's ADC will be changing next season."

"Mn… ah?"

Zhuang Yibai, who had spent all that time cooking his duck intestines and was about to enjoy the fruits of his labor at last, lifted his head with his mouth open. "What change? Who's changing? Our ADC…… Who said that our ADC is going to change?!"

…

Zhuang Yibai didn't even think to put on his jacket before he grabbed his phone and hastily walked out of the restaurant.

This wasn't the type of conversation that should be had in front of other people. He found a corner to make his call from as he shrugged his shoulders, trembling from the cold.

Ding-*ge* didn't pick up, so he called Lu Boyuan, who only answered the phone right when the call was about to cut off.

"*Ge*, what's going on?" A gust of cold wind scraped past, causing Xiao Bai to shiver as he spoke. "Why are there claims that Pine is gonna transfer to MFG? Have you heard about this? Is Ding-*ge* just going to allow these people to start rumors for the sake of drawing attention…"

Lu Boyuan said, “I’ve heard Pine mention it before.”

Xiao Bai paused, as if he was completely frozen stiff. “Pine… mentioned it to you before? What did he say…”

“That he was likely going to leave the team.” Lu Boyuan set a cup of coffee down next to his boyfriend’s hand; they were at a hotel room together, though Jian Rong was currently playing ranked on a laptop. Noticing Xiao Bai’s silence, he lifted an eyebrow. “He didn’t tell you?”

The wind poured into Xiao Bai’s shirt collar and sleeves as the chill seeped into him from head to toe, but it was like he couldn’t sense it at all. His fists clenched and unclenched, over and over.

“No.” He said hoarsely, “Is it confirmed? Then – then, our ADC next season…”

“Ding-*ge*’s discussing the options. For now, the expectation is that it’ll be the second team’s ADC, Xiao Yu, but there are some decent choices from the trainee team as well. As for the other LPL teams, Ding-*ge* is favoring Doufu.”

Xiao Bai didn’t even feel like imagining what would happen if Doufu joined the team—if he and Jian Rong would march straight to the police station together, arms hooked around each other’s shoulders.

No wonder Pine didn’t want to sell rot with him anymore, and even wanted him to change his lock screen and cover photo.

Lu Boyuan listened to the sound of the wind coming from the other end of the call. As if sensing something, he lowered his eyes and said, “It isn’t certain yet, but if I’m remembering correctly, Pine should be going to MFG’s base tonight to have a detailed discussion with their manager. A conclusion will probably be reached in the next few days.”

Xiao Bai’s eyes ached from the wind.

He took a deep breath before he reached up and rubbed at his eyes. “…*Ge*, why didn’t the team try to get him to stay? Didn’t we just win the championship, why does he want to leave so badly…”

“MFG’s offer is pretty high, and their team is also willing to revolve their playstyle around the bot lane. Pine is still young and very ambitious, it’s not strange if he wants to transfer.”

“…”

Detecting Xiao Bai’s emotional state, Lu Boyuan cast his gaze down and comforted him calmly, “The times are different now, and it’s common for players to transfer in and out of teams. You’ll still be friends after a transfer, you just won’t be practicing and competing together anymore, so don’t be too sad.”

—

By the time Pine left MFG’s base, it was already one in the morning.

After he got in the car, he pulled out his phone, wanting to take another look at the Weibo post that he happened to come across two hours ago.

The content of the post was "*I ran into Bye and his girlfriend at the amusement park, Bye was even carrying his girlfriend's bag for her, how sweet*"—but when he tapped on the screen, he discovered that his phone had run out of battery at some point and had turned off.

He stared out the window at the constantly retreating streetlights and inhaled deeply. The frigid air seemed to rush from his nose to his throat and down to his heart, leaving a cutting pain in its winding wake.

He knew this would happen: once he let the other person go during the day, he probably wouldn't be able to get him back again.

After he returned to the base, he didn't go inside immediately. Instead, he leaned against the wall, took out his cigarettes, and started to smoke quietly.

Zhuang Yibai didn't like the smell of cigarette smoke. Even though he had never made any complaints in front of Pine, he would always maintain a tiny bit more distance between the two of them whenever Pine smoked.

Another half an hour had passed by the time he finished his pack of cigarettes. Pine turned around and opened the front door of the base before he took off his shoes and went inside.

It was dark in the base; only a few lights were turned on in the hallway.

So when he saw an indistinct, round shadow in front of the door to his room, he stopped in place for a second before he continued walking forward.

The person that he had secretly thought about for an entire night—for a day, for a very long time—sat in front of his door like a debt collector. He was only wearing a thin shirt, and he stared down at the phone in his hands as he called someone over and over. An announcement that "*the other party has already turned off the phone*" continuously rang out through the speakers.

Pine nudged the person's knee with his leg.

Zhuang Yibai, who was focused on his phone, raised his head. His eyes were still filled with agitation and anxiousness from his calls not going through, but the moment their gazes met, Xiao Bai's tightly knitted brows slowly relaxed. Then they furrowed closely together again…

Right as Pine was about to speak, he heard a *thunk*.

Zhuang Yibai discarded his phone and threw himself straight at Pine, arms wrapped firmly around his leg.

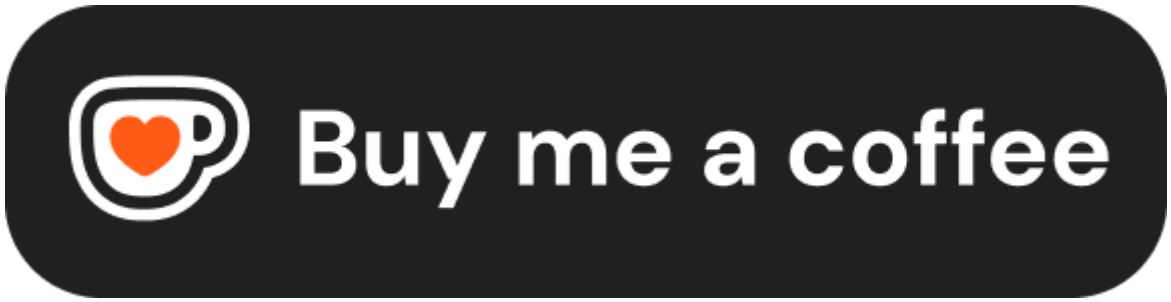
Pine: "…"

Pine reached out with the intention of pulling him away, but when he looked down, he saw that Zhuang Yibai had buried his entire face against his leg and was clinging on for dear life.

"Jiang Yusong, you're not human."

He instantly froze on the spot, hand suspended in the air above Xiao Bai's hair. A rare flustered and helpless expression appeared on his face.

Zhuang Yibai was crying.



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ICDI Extra 7: (Side CP – P-Bai) Dumbass.

Thank you to Everybody and Somebody for the Ko-fis!

Actually, Xiao Bai had finished crying a while ago, but his voice still sounded nasally. “Over all these years, I went through so much trouble to try to diligently and sincerely please you, and this is how you treat me.”

After Xiao Bai latched onto Pine’s leg, he felt the urge to cry again. As a result, he pressed his face against Pine’s leg and unceremoniously wiped away his tears.

There was a long pause before he finally heard Pine say from above, “Why are you sitting here?”

Xiao Bai said, muffled, “Waiting for you.”

Pine could roughly guess what Xiao Bai had found out. “Not gonna wait in your room?”

“I was afraid that I would miss you.”

“What if I didn’t come back.”

“…”

Xiao Bai said quietly, “That wouldn’t happen. No matter what… you have to at least pack your stuff.”

The hand that had stopped midair continued making its way down. It sank into Zhuang Yibai's hair, but since Pine was worried that his hand was cold, he didn't dare to actually touch him.

Pine: "Get up."

Xiao Bai: "No. Explain yourself."

Pine opened the door. "Let's go inside and talk about it."

Xiao Bai didn't budge. "No."

The phone chimed from where it had fallen on the floor. Pine swept a glance at it. "Your phone."

That reminded Xiao Bai: "Why didn't you answer my calls? Scared that I was going to interfere with you signing your contract?"

"It ran out of battery and turned off." Pine said, "It's in my pocket, if you don't believe me you can take it out and see for yourself."

Xiao Bai stopped talking, and he silently tightened his arms around Pine's leg.

Pine: "If you don't let go soon, Qian-*ge* is going to return in a bit, and he's going to take a picture of you."

Xiao Bai: "…"

Pine: "Then he'll send it to Jian Rong."

Xiao Bai: "…I can't stand up."

He loosened his grip slightly and lifted his head. The rims of his eyes were very red. “I sat for too long, so my legs are sore.

“Help me get up.”

Pine gave a soft sigh before he bent over and pulled Xiao Bai up from the ground. Xiao Bai took advantage of the momentum to lean towards Pine, burying his entire face against Pine’s shoulder.

They were extremely close together, almost as if they were hugging.

Ever since Xiao Bai did this the last time he was drunk, from that point on he couldn’t help but scooch over and rest his head against Pine’s shoulder whenever the two of them stood near each other. It didn’t matter if they were backstage during a match or in the middle of a business event. Pine’s shoulders were very broad and comfortable to lean on.

At first, Pine would chase him away, but after he got used to it, he let Xiao Bai do as he pleased.

Xiao Bai turned his head and sniffed Pine’s neck. “You smoked so many cigarettes.”

Pine: “Mn, stay further away from me.”

“It’s not like I dislike you.”

Pine wasn’t wearing a scarf, so even his neck felt cold from standing outside for half an hour. Noticing Pine’s body temperature, Xiao Bai lifted his hand and rubbed the back of Pine’s neck in an attempt to warm him up.

Pine wanted to push him away, but because of that gesture, he paused. In the end, he wrapped his arm around Xiao Bai's waist and half-dragged him into the room, the same way he usually did when Xiao Bai was drunk.

Once they were inside, Pine closed the door. He lowered Xiao Bai onto the couch and tugged out a few tissues, which he then handed to him. "Don't cry."

"I'm not, my eyes are just tired from having too much fun." After Xiao Bai finished splitting hairs, he felt like even a ghost wouldn't believe his words, so he amended, "So what if I cry? The entire world knows that my man is about to run off, I'm the only person who didn't. Am I not allowed to cry?"

Pine: "..."

Pine turned to face away from him, head lowered slightly as he took off his jacket. "Teammate. Not man."

Xiao Bai slumped back against the couch. "It's all the same."

He watched as Pine changed clothes. Pine appeared to have a thin build, but he was actually very strong; when he lifted his arms, he had rippling lines of muscle. Clearly, they both weighed about the same amount—Xiao Bai was even a few kilograms heavier than Pine—yet Pine still managed to effortlessly haul him away whenever he was in a drunken frenzy.

His phone was still chiming with new messages, but Xiao Bai didn't care, nor did he go to check the texts. He just kept staring at Pine until the other person turned back around and met his gaze.

Xiao Bai spoke: “How much did MFG offer you for the signing bonus?”

Pine: “Twenty million.”

“…Did MFG’s boss win the lottery?” Xiao Bai suddenly remembered something, and he sat bolt upright. “P-baby, if MFG offers you such a high price, they definitely don’t have any money left to buy more players. You’re gonna walk into the base and then—oh shit, four noobs! Also, it’s not like you don’t know how trash their team’s support is. Don’t you always quit on the spot when you match with him in ranked…”

Pine said mildly, “MFG’s owner changed.”

“?”

“An e-commerce company bought their team. Apart from the top and mid lane positions, all the other members are getting switched out.” Pine tossed his lighter onto the table. “They signed a Korean support.”

Xiao Bai’s lips parted. A moment passed before he squeezed out, “Well, so what? Which LPL team is better established than ours right now? After reorganizing their players, MFG will have to practice their teamwork for sure…”

“It’s true that they’ll have to build it up again.” Pine brushed it off lightly. “Their team is going to revolve around the bot lane next season, so most of their previous strategies can’t be used anymore.”

“…”

There were too many people who could carry in TTC. You had to fight for MVP, and the resources rarely favored a single lane. If Pine went to MFG, he would be the core of the team; he would receive the most resources, and he would be protected on all sides. Even disregarding MFG's competitive performance, it would undoubtedly be smooth sailing for the bot lane with Pine's mechanics and strengths…

As a fellow pro gamer, Xiao Bai knew just how attractive MFG's proposed conditions were.

Xiao Bai couldn't come up with any other reasons for Pine to stay. He lowered his eyes as that uncomfortable feeling surged through him again, the same one that filled him back when he was sitting in the doorway and none of his calls were going through.

Pine looked at him quietly. When Xiao Bai didn't speak, he asked, "Don't want me to leave?"

Without any hesitation, Xiao Bai said, "No kidding."

"Why."

Xiao Bai was caught a little off guard by the question. "…We competed together for so long, and we have a great relationship with each other. Of course I can't bear to see you leave…"

"What about before me." Pine said evenly, "TTC's former ADC. When he left, did you also cry like this?"

Xiao Bai was cut off in the middle of his sentence, and his mouth hung open slightly as he stared blankly at Pine.

When TTC's former ADC left, did he cry?

No.

That ADC was his partner for three and a half years, from his trainee days all the way until they won a championship together. They had also gotten along quite well, and though he felt regretful that he couldn't compete with him anymore after they parted ways, he was still happy that it meant the other person could receive a higher salary instead—

Pine twisted open a bottle of water and tilted his head back to drink from it. Xiao Bai's gaze lingered for a while on Pine's protruding Adam's apple before he contemplated briefly and said, "I was young back then, and I thought that we could still play games together after separating. But once he went to a different team, never mind playing together—he didn't even add me as a friend in game when I switched accounts…"

"I won't do that." It felt like Pine was negotiating with him. "Outside of practice, you can ask me to play with you whenever you want. I won't delete you from my friends list, and I'll also add you if I switch accounts."

"…"

"Would it be okay then."

"…No."

“Why?”

Xiao Bai felt a certain nebulous emotion inside of him reach a snapping point. Because of Pine’s questioning, he didn’t feel like coming up with any more of those dignified, reasonable excuses. “Why do you have so many ‘whys’? It’s because I still want to live together with you, I still want to compete alongside you, I want to share meals with you and I want to chat with you. I just don’t want you to go to another team…”

A ringtone interrupted him.

Pine glanced down at the caller ID before he picked the phone up from the table and tossed it into Xiao Bai’s lap. “Your Cangshu.”

Xiao Bai exhaled. Quite a few seconds passed before he finally answered the phone.

“Hello.” His voice was a little low. “No, I’m fine. I didn’t see your messages, that’s all… You have my jacket?”

Xiao Bai was startled for a moment before he remembered that he left his down-filled parka in the restaurant. “I forgot about it… You brought it back to your dorm? Okay, I’ll come get it from you the next time I’m free.”

The girl thanked him politely for his willingness to be their chauffeur today, and she also expressed that she had a fun time at the park. Preoccupied, Xiao Bai replied half-heartedly, “It’s good you had fun… Me? I was also pretty happy…”

After hanging up, Xiao Bai abruptly recalled something. His head shot up as he said, “Did Fu-*ge* offer you seventeen million this season?”

Pine watched him silently and didn’t say anything.

“How about this.” Xiao Bai licked his lips and subconsciously reached out to grab Pine’s clothing. “I’ll go negotiate with Fu-*ge* and ask for my signing bonus to be reduced by three million, so Fu-*ge* can offer you twenty million…”

“Don’t talk nonsense.” Pine took a step back, wresting his shirt out of Xiao Bai’s grip. “It’s late now, go back to your room and sleep.”

“I’m not talking nonsense.” Xiao Bai stood up. “Or do you think that it’s still too low? Then I’ll decrease my pay by five million, I’m being serious.”

“Five million?” Pine let out a low, ambiguous laugh. He asked somewhat flatly, “You don’t want to keep that money for your wife?”

Xiao Bai thought that Pine was starting to reconsider it, so he immediately said, “It’s not like I’ll be getting a wife anytime soon. Also, I still have my savings account…”

Pine pulled a random shirt out from his dresser. “Leave, I’m going to shower.”

“Hang on, we’re not done talking yet!” Xiao Bai chased after him, chattering away in his ear—

“You didn’t already sign the contract with MFG, did you?

“So why didn’t you tell me beforehand? If Cangshu and her friend didn’t mention it, would I have only found out on the day you moved out of the base?

“Just what exactly would it take for you to stay…”

Before Xiao Bai could finish his sentence, the person in front of him suddenly turned around, grabbed his shoulders, and pushed him against the wall.

Stunned, Xiao Bai subconsciously searched for Pine’s eyes, only to see within them an expanse of deep, repressed blackness. Pine’s eyes had always been darker in color, and Xiao Bai could clearly see his own reflection within them.

“Why would I stay?” Pine said, “To watch you date someone?”

Xiao Bai smelled the cigarette smoke clinging to Pine’s body. Even though there was clearly more distance between them now than there was earlier, his heart started to hammer away unstoppably.

It took him several seconds to digest what Pine just said. He pondered over it carefully for a while before he frowned and asked uncertainly, “Do you not want me to date? Is that it?”

Pine was silent.

Silence meant that he was agreeing by default.

In a flash, Xiao Bai felt like he understood now—he understood everything.

He raised his hand, as if he was swearing an oath.

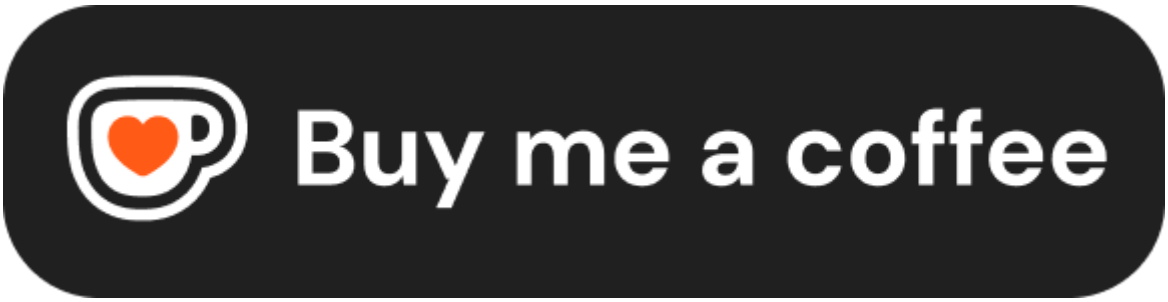
“Fine then. Even though I can guarantee that dating won’t affect my performance, as long as you—Jiang Yusong—refuse to give your permission, I—Zhuang Yibai—definitely won’t date! I won’t go on blind dates anymore either! If you don’t retire for the rest of your life, then I’ll be your faithful, dependable, capable support for the rest of mine!”

Pine’s eyes darkened even more.

Xiao Bai thought a little and added, “I’ll keep my promise, but if I go back on my word, I…”

Pine: “Dumbass.”

After coldly spitting out that word, Pine reached out and gripped Xiao Bai’s chin. With some force and a bit of frustrated resignation, he kissed him firmly.



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ICDI Extra 8: (Side CP – P-Bai) I like you.

Pine's lips were very cold. Xiao Bai could taste the flavor of tobacco from his mouth, and his mind was completely blank.

Sensing his stiffness, Pine couldn't help but tighten his grip on Xiao Bai's chin.

Pine knew that the moment he opened this door, he would no longer be able to suppress the rest of his feelings anymore.

It would most likely be very difficult to touch Xiao Bai again after this.

At the beginning, he only thought that Zhuang Yibai was annoying.

The way he spoke was annoying, the way he got close was annoying, the way he smelled was annoying, and the way he smiled was also extremely annoying. Pine didn't understand how such a talkative guy could exist in this world. Every day, Xiao Bai had a surplus of energy, and he was always the loudest person in the practice room. He was also especially fond of approaching Pine, and he refused to be chased away no matter how many cold looks Pine gave him.

These troublesome days lasted for half a year. Then one day, Pine got a high fever and was sent to the hospital.

When he woke up on the hospital bed, Zhuang Yibai was in the middle of pestering the doctor. He stuck to the doctor's side and kept repeating things like "*when will his fever go down*," "*he won't get brain damage from*

the fever, right," and "*he and I are partners, what am I supposed to do if his brain gets damaged*."

After he skillfully annoyed the doctor into leaving, Zhuang Yibai turned around and met his eyes.

Before Pine could say anything, Xiao Bai suddenly walked briskly over to him and stooped over, leaning into his space. At the time, they were probably only mere centimeters apart.

Zhuang Yibai pressed his forehead against Pine's before he frowned and murmured to him: *What to do, you're still burning up*.

Things snowballed rapidly from that point on.

When they locked eyes, he felt at ease; when they sat shoulder-to-shoulder, he felt content. The first time Xiao Bai used the same water cup that he had already drunk from, he pulled two all-nighters in a row playing games.

He had attempted the avoidance route before, but he couldn't hide from Zhuang Yibai, who seemed to be omnipresent. Or perhaps he was the one who just couldn't control himself, as his gaze always subconsciously followed Zhuang Yibai around.

He could only fall deeper and deeper.

After a long pause, Zhuang Yibai lifted his hands.

Pine prepared himself to be pushed away.

But the anticipated shove didn't come. Xiao Bai's hands were shaking a little as they fumbled their way over Pine's chest, slowly and carefully. Then, as if he couldn't help it, he latched tightly onto Pine's shirt.

Pine jolted slightly; he felt like his heart had been seized instead.

He resembled a wild beast that had been starving for a very long time and was finally able to eat something to alleviate its agonizing hunger. He lightened the pressure and rubbed his thumb softly against the place that it was gripping before as his kisses also grew gentler.

Of course, Xiao Bai didn't have much of an opinion either way.

Fierce or tender, he felt dizzy regardless. His pulse shuddered in his ears, and even his knees felt a little weak. The skin that Pine was touching was scalding hot.

He sat for too long next to the door earlier, so his lips were dry. Pine traced over them delicately with his tongue, sending a thrill through Xiao Bai.

When they separated, both of them were breathing quite heavily.

Xiao Bai's entire face was red, especially his mouth. Since it was his first time kissing someone, he didn't know how to adjust his breathing, and there was a glimmer in his eyes from reflexively tearing up. Judging from his expression, he seemed to be a little out of it still.

Other than the wet shine on his lips, Pine looked the same as usual.

Xiao Bai stared at him for a while. After a long pause, he finally found his voice again. “If you’re gonna kiss me… then just kiss me, why swear at me too.”

Pine: “.”

Xiao Bai was about to say something else, but Pine abruptly backed up and settled his hand on top of Xiao Bai’s hair. He said mildly, “Go back to your room.”

After that, Pine bent over and picked up the change of clothes that he had tossed onto the floor earlier. Under Xiao Bai’s stunned gaze, he turned around and went into the bathroom.

Pine closed the bathroom door and stood in place for a few moments, only moving again once he heard his bedroom door shut outside. Eyes lowered, he silently took off his clothes before he walked into the shower stall and turned on the water with a flick of his hand. The chilly water soaked into his hair, and over ten seconds passed before it gradually warmed up.

Post-shower, he casually draped the towel over his wet hair. When he walked out of the bathroom, he saw that there was someone on his bed.

Xiao Bai was lying on his stomach with his phone in his hand, though he wasn’t looking at it. Instead, his face was buried in the pillow.

The running water was too loud, so Pine didn’t hear him come back.

At the sound of footsteps, Xiao Bai turned his head. His face was still red, but his expression had finally become more natural. “You really took your

sweet time in the shower."

Pine went quiet for a few seconds before he said, "Didn't I tell you to go back to your room?"

"I wanna stay here." Xiao Bai only went back to his room earlier to change into his pajamas. He sat up from the bed and said, "Your hair is still dripping wet."

Pine carelessly swiped at his hair with the towel. By the time he looked up again, Xiao Bai had already pulled out the hair dryer from a drawer with well-practiced ease.

"Come here." Xiao Bai sat cross-legged on the bed as he patted the space next to him. "*Gege* will help you blow-dry it."

Pine: "No need."

Xiao Bai didn't bother arguing with him; he just got up and tugged him over. Brows furrowed, Pine allowed Xiao Bai to push him down so that he was sitting on the bed.

The reason Pine got a fever that one time was because he didn't blow-dry his hair after taking a shower. The base didn't have the heating turned on back then, and he played ranked for an entire night while facing the window. The next day, he immediately got a high fever and entered a half-conscious state.

From that point on, Xiao Bai would often forcibly blow-dry his hair for him.

Nobody spoke while the hair dryer was on. Xiao Bai stood next to the bed and carded through Pine's hair adeptly.

This was the same position they had been in many nights before, almost as if they hadn't kissed earlier at all.

It was easy to dry men's hair, since it didn't take very long. Xiao Bai turned off the hair dryer, but he kept his fingers buried in Pine's hair.

"P-baby." Even Xiao Bai's knuckles turned white as he gripped the hair dryer. He was usually someone with a silver tongue, but at that moment, his words came out jumbled and halting. "Do you, um, you know…"

"Mn."

Xiao Bai was caught off guard. "Let me finish…"

"I like you."

"…"

While Xiao Bai was stunned, Pine lifted his head a little and calmly shot a glance at him. He answered, "Yes, I like you."

Even though Xiao Bai had more or less thought it through earlier when he was sprawled out on Pine's bed, he still felt rather shocked upon actually hearing Pine say those words out loud.

On the other hand, Pine was very calm. His shower seemed to have washed away many of his emotions—or perhaps he had just withdrawn them all back into himself.

He took the hair dryer from Xiao Bai's hand and put it back in its original place. "You don't need to feel troubled."

"That's not it, I don't think it's troublesome," Xiao Bai interrupted him before pausing briefly. "I just… haven't figured it all out yet."

"What?"

When we were kissing earlier, it felt extremely good.

I can't figure out if it's because you're good at kissing, or if it's because of something else.

It was quite embarrassing and difficult to say that out loud, so instead, Xiao Bai pressed his lips together and called out, "P-baby."

Pine: "Speak."

"Can we kiss one more time?"

"…"

Pine lifted his gaze and looked at him like he was an idiot.

"If we kiss one more time, I'll be able to get to the bottom of it, really." Xiao Bai leaned towards him and negotiated, "A peck is okay too…"

Right as Xiao Bai was about to touch him, Pine reached out and cupped the back of Xiao Bai's head before he tilted his own head to the side and kissed him.

The taste of tobacco was gone; Xiao Bai had personally bought him the strawberry toothpaste that was lingering in his mouth. At first, Pine had frowned and rejected the toothpaste, but he ultimately failed to dissuade Xiao Bai, so he ended up unboxing it and placing it on his washstand.

At that moment, Xiao Bai felt like it was indeed a good purchase.

This kiss was very short, because their phones started chiming with consecutive WeChat notifications at the same time. Someone was probably tagging them in a group chat that they both were part of.

For the first time, Zhuang Yibai—the little prince of social media—found himself irritated by the sound of mobile notifications.

Pine released him, but they remained very close to each other as Pine gently wiped Xiao Bai's mouth with the back of his hand. He was about to turn around to look for their phones when someone grabbed ahold of his shirt.

"P-baby." Xiao Bai looked straight at him. "I seem to…"

His gaze couldn't help but wander down to Pine's tightly pursed lips, a fleeting glance that he quickly retracted. "Like it quite a bit when you kiss me."

Pine: "…"

"Really, my heart's beating even faster than it does when we win a championship."

Something flickered through Pine's eyes, though it quickly vanished. He lifted his hand and swatted Xiao Bai's forehead. "Wake up a little, you're straight."

"I'm very awake right now, I'm so awake that I could go compete in a match immediately!" Xiao Bai paused. "If I'm straight, why did you kiss me then? If I were straight, I would've beaten you up and sent you flying out of the base earlier."

Pine: "Who could you possibly beat up in this base?"

Xiao Bai: "…"

Pine picked up a phone and glanced at it before he tossed it to Xiao Bai. "Looking for you."

Xiao Bai lowered his head in bewilderment.

[XIU: [Sharing a Weibo post] @P-Baby's Little Support – look at you, not even gonna tell your big brothers that you're dating now? Was it fun at the amusement park?]

[XIU: And here I thought that your ADC didn't want you anymore, but it turns out that you were the one who abandoned P-baby first.]

[XIU: @P-Baby's Little Support you there?]

[XIU: @Pine P-*gege*, tell your support to get on here.]

What kind of nonsense was this?

Confused, Xiao Bai clicked on the video that XIU shared. Unexpectedly, this video automatically jumped to about a minute in, displaying a scene where he was holding Cangshu's bag for her while she was on the spinning teacup ride.

Pine's expression froze briefly before he instantly averted his gaze and got up from the bed.

Xiao Bai locked his phone and stood up too. "Where are you going?"

Pine: "To get some water."

Xiao Bai: "You've seen that video already?"

Pine let out a very faint "*en*."

Xiao Bai: "You're not also under the impression that I'm dating her, are you?"

Pine lowered his eyes as he poured water into a cup and refused to acknowledge him.

Xiao Bai explained, "I didn't want to go on any of the rides, so I could only look after their bags for them."

Pine added a touch of honey to the water.

Xiao Bai: "I'm not dating her."

Xiao Bai: "Hold on… so you really were angry earlier today? Because I was planning on going to the amusement park with her?"

Pine said, “I wasn’t.”

The more Xiao Bai thought about it, the more he understood. “You were, you even told me to change my profile picture and WeChat username.”

Pine: “.”

Speaking of that, Xiao Bai still felt a bit wronged. “I wasn’t trying to go on a date with her, I wanted to show you around the park instead. You haven’t been to that theme park yet since coming to Shanghai, right?”

Pine stuffed the cup of honey water into his hands.

Xiao Bai took a sip from it while Pine turned around and went to get the iPad that was on the bed. Xiao Bai followed after him, still holding the cup.

“P-baby.” Half-lying next to him, Xiao Bai licked his lips and couldn’t help but ask, “When did you start liking me?

“This year? Last year? Or did you fall in love with me at first sight as soon as you joined the team? Ah…” Understanding dawned on Xiao Bai. “No wonder you didn’t talk to me a lot at the beginning.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

Xiao Bai gripped his cup tighter and tighter. All of a sudden, he lowered his voice and asked mysteriously, “Then all those times I went to sleep with you in the past, did you ever…”

Pine: “No. You’re very noisy.”

Xiao Bai slid down a little more until he was nearly lying on the pillow. “Oh.”

Xiao Bai stared at the iPad screen for quite a while before he raised his head slightly. Looking at the sharp, sleek line of Pine’s jaw, he couldn’t resist calling out to him. “P-baby.”

“Mn.”

“Let’s start dating?”

Pine’s fingers jolted a bit, and he turned to look at him.

Ever since they kissed, Xiao Bai discovered that something had changed between him and Pine—or rather, he was probably the one who had changed. One casual, cursory glance from Pine was enough to make his throat go somewhat dry.

Pine said, “Do you know what you’re saying?”

“Of course I do.” Xiao Bai rubbed his nose. “Also, didn’t we kiss earlier?”

Pine stared down at him for a moment. “You do more than just kiss when you’re dating someone.”

“…”

Xiao Bai thought about it a little.

And then he started getting a bit too damn carried away.

At Xiao Bai’s silence, Pine decided to give him a way out, one that he had prepared long in advance for him, which would also end this topic of

conversation. “Today, you…”

“The other stuff… we can do it too.”

“…”

“Tonight? Right now?” Xiao Bai’s face flushed. “But I don’t know how, do you?”

Xiao Bai took out his phone and pulled up Baidu before he quickly typed out “*how do two guys have sex*.” Right as he hit enter, someone snatched his phone away from him, locked the screen, and tossed it onto the bedside table.

“You do know how?” Maintaining that same position, as if he was still holding his phone, Xiao Bai turned his head. When he saw Pine’s expression, he was a little startled.

Pine’s brows were furrowed, his lips pressed into a straight line. The look on his face alone didn’t seem to be much different from usual, but his ears were as red as the fiery sunset that Xiao Bai had observed earlier in the evening at the amusement park.

Pine: “Not right now, don’t search up weird things.”

“…Oh.” Xiao Bai thought, *I’ll just search it up secretly on my own later*, and said: “Are we dating then?”

Pine glanced at him and quickly looked away again. “Whatever makes you happy.”

After Pine said that, Zhuang Yibai kept feeling like he was floating.

He slumped lazily against Pine's shoulder as he watched him play Fight the Landlord. Once Pine threw out a bunch of random cards and used up all of his beans, Xiao Bai nudged Pine gently with his shoulder. "Give me the MFG manager's WeChat."

Pine: "What for."

"I wanna ask if they need a support."

Pine frowned. "Don't joke around like that."

"I'm not, I'm being serious." Xiao Bai said, "I still have a year left on my contract with TTC, so I can go over next year. If I continue to perform as well as I did this year, they won't offer me a low salary."

Pine was silent for a few seconds. "Didn't you say that you wanted to stay in TTC forever?"

"I still do." Xiao Bai tapped on his screen and tossed out a card for him. "But MFG's base is too far away, I want to be together with you."

Pine grabbed his chaotic card-dealing hand and put it under the blanket. "It's fine."

Xiao Bai knitted his brows. "How is it fine? I insist…"

"I'm not going to MFG."

Stunned, Xiao Bai stared at him blankly. “What do you mean… You rejected them?”

“Mn.”

“Then why did you talk for so long today? Here I was thinking that you signed the contract already…”

“Their manager kept making me stay.”

Xiao Bai nodded and blinked. “How come you changed your mind?”

“An all-Chinese team is more comfortable.” Pine explained indifferently, “I didn’t want to learn how to communicate with a Korean support, it’s inconvenient.”

Xiao Bai let out an “*oh*” and concluded for him, “You still think that I’m the best.”

Pine went quiet for a long time, so long that Xiao Bai almost moved on to the next topic. Finally, Pine said in a faint, muffled voice, “Mn.”

That night, Pine wasn’t able to drive Xiao Bai out of his room.

This frequently occurred in the past as well. If Zhuang Yibai stayed in his room until it was somewhat late, he would say that he was too lazy to move, and he would insist on sleeping there.

That was also precisely the reason why Pine had an extra pillow prepared on his bed.

At three in the morning, Pine received a text from Qian-*ge*.

[Yuan Qian: Asleep? I'm back at the base, and I brought you guys some local specialties. Is Xiao Bai in your room?]

Pine replied with an "*en*."

[Yuan Qian: Alrighty then, I'll put them in the living room. Let him know in the morning when he wakes up.]

Pine set his phone down and flipped around to meet Xiao Bai's dazed eyes.

He didn't seem to have truly woken up at all. Several seconds later, he closed his eyes again as one hand stretched out lazily and landed slackly on Pine's arm. Then, he fell back into a deep slumber.

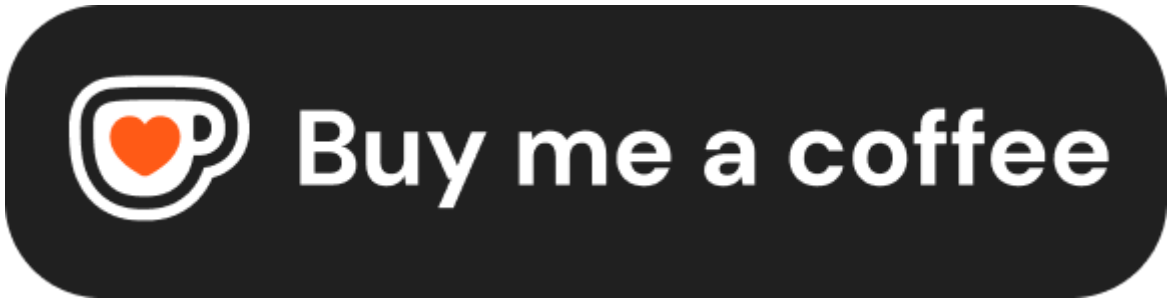
Relishing in Xiao Bai's warmth, Pine propped himself up and leaned over to kiss him, quiet and restrained.

Actually, he didn't say it out loud, but there was another reason why he gave up on the transfer.

MFG's base was indeed too far away. Between leaving Zhuang Yibai and watching Zhuang Yibai date someone else, he chose the latter option.

He couldn't avoid Zhuang Yibai; he was willing to sink ever deeper.

Yan: One more chapter ☺



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ICDI Extra 9: (Side CP – P-Bai) Someone else come be TTC's manager, laozi quits.

Thanks to nymmiah and Kitty for the Ko-fis!

After finishing a ranked game, Jian Rong opened the scoreboard and hit the report button for the player with the KDA of 1/7/8. He vented all of the suppressed insults that he couldn't let out in the game onto his keyboard, and an impressive, flowing 300-word mini essay appeared in the blink of an eye.

Then he whipped his head around, at the end of his patience. "If you have something to say, spit it out."

From the moment Jian Rong got back to the base until now, Zhuang Yibai had kept his eyes trained unwaveringly on him. Xiao Bai blinked and said, "There isn't really anything I wanna say…"

"In that case, you turn your head right back around for me."

"—Actually, I do have a question for you."

"Ask."

"Am I really allowed to ask it?"

"…"

Under Jian Rong's "*do you want to die*" glare, Xiao Bai rolled his gaming chair over to his side. In a very small voice, he asked bashfully, "It's just… you know, you and my *ge*… erm, *ss*—I don't really know how to phrase this… anyway, just… um… does your butt hurt?"

TTC's mid laner and support had a falling-out.

It went something like this: Jian Rong changed his stream profile picture to a super ugly photo of Xiao Bai captured during a match some years ago, back when he was in his *shamate*[1] dark past phase. Not to be outdone, Xiao Bai changed his profile picture to a photo of Lu Boyuan taken a few years ago, but it ended up attracting a bunch of comments that kept shouting "*my husband was so handsome before too*" under his Weibo.

During streams, neither of them interacted with each other. When they happened to be matched onto opposing sides during a ranked game, Jian Rong treated the bot lane like it was the mid lane, while Xiao Bai refused to admit defeat and kept visiting the mid lane with the jungler… and so on. They were all some childish, harmless ways to target each other.

"He came to the bot lane four times in ten minutes, I've never met someone so ridiculous before! He was just relying on the fact that you weren't there to furiously screw me over. Thankfully my *ge* went in for a checkup; if my *ge* was also duo queuing with him, I might as well have just AFKed that match." Xiao Bai complained, hand braced against the armrest of Pine's gaming chair. Then he lowered his head and took a sip from the milk tea that Pine had brought back for him.

Pine had just returned from renewing his contract at the club headquarters, and he was currently in the middle of solo queuing to fulfill his stream quota. As he skillfully scored last hits on minions, he asked, “So what exactly did you ask him.”

Xiao Bai glanced at the webcam, which was lit up, and averted his eyes unnaturally. A long moment later, he finally muttered, “…Nothing really, it was just something tiny and irrelevant.”

He was a frequent guest in Pine’s stream by now, so when the fans heard that, they immediately started teasing him—

[Zhuang Yibai, you’ve changed. You have a little secret that you can’t tell Pine.]

[They’re so close to each other… Are they really not together?]

[This hardcore fan can pat my chest and tell you: definitely not, these two straight guys usually interact like this.]

Pine rarely checked the barrage when he was gaming, and he only kept the barrage helper open to give a little face to the spectators. When he sensed the weight leaning against him vanish, he turned his head and asked, “Where are you going?”

“To change my clothes.” Xiao Bai said, “Aren’t we going out for a team dinner soon?”

Pine watched him absent-mindedly leave the practice room. He only withdrew his gaze after he could no longer see Xiao Bai’s figure anymore.

His teammates had already destroyed the enemy Nexus, and the game returned to the post-game lobby once it ended. Pine sat back in his chair and stretched his neck from side to side. Right as the team's support sent him an invite to duo queue together, he exited the lobby.

Zhuang Yibai was acting a little strange these days.

It wasn't very obvious—he just tended to zone out a lot and was often lost in thought, eyelashes drooping downwards.

Zhuang Yibai was someone who couldn't hide things, but his current state had already persisted for almost an entire week, and he looked like he was about to burst from keeping whatever it was to himself.

Pine lit a cigarette and looked at the barrage helper for once, just in time to see the following comment: [Are there still people who are unaware that Bye constantly plasters himself to Pine solely for the sake of selling rot and getting free popularity? I feel sorry for Pine, he can't say anything since he's his junior. He couldn't even escape during this transfer window.]

Cigarette dangling from his mouth, he kicked and blocked that person for 999 years. Then he said indifferently, "Mods, pay a little more attention, don't make me do it myself."

Ding-*ge* had arranged the outing this time, and he had also booked a private karaoke room for them later that night. Their vacation was about to end; practice was going to resume in two days so that they could prepare for the League of Legends Demacia Cup tournament.

Because it was the last party before practice began, Ding-*ge* made an exception and actively ordered alcohol for them. Originally, he just wanted them to have a few drinks to satisfy their cravings, but—

"In celebration of us getting a grand slam this year!"

"In celebration of Captain successfully coming out of the closet!"

"In celebration of every team member renewing their contract!"

"Congratulations to us in advance for successfully winning the Demacia Cup!"

Yuan Qian, the de facto drinking leader, kept standing up and coming up with new toasts. Everyone else also felt happy when they heard the things he had to say, so they kept pouring drink after drink into their mouths.

Yuan Qian was fine in every other aspect, but he had one shortcoming: he liked to urge other people to drink.

When Jian Rong heard "*successfully coming out of the closet*," he blinked and silently finished off the remaining liquid in his cup.

He was about to pour himself some more alcohol when the person next to him took the cup from him.

Lu Boyuan picked up the freshly purchased bottled water and secretly poured it into Jian Rong's cup underneath the table. After giving it back to him, Lu Boyuan raised his own glass and said to Yuan Qian nonchalantly, "Best wishes for a successful marriage proposal."

Yuan Qian scratched his head and blushed. "*Ai* okay, thank you Captain."

Jian Rong: "…"

Yuan Qian downed his drink before raising his cup again. "Another advance congratulations…"

"Enough with your freaking advance congratulations." Ding-*ge* reached out and tugged his arm back down. "Who's going to take responsibility if everyone gets drunk later?!"

Yuan Qian immediately said, "If Xiao Rong gets drunk, he has Captain. If Xiao Bai gets drunk, he has Pine. Don't worry."

Ding-*ge*: "Then what happens if you get drunk? I'm gonna say this now, I won't be able to lift you up."

Yuan Qian thought about it and ended up setting his cup down.

But it was rather late to stop now. A certain extremely supportive professional fun-seeker had lifted his glass with almost every toast and was already red in the face from drinking.

Pine shifted Xiao Bai's cup away from him and watched as he swirled his chopsticks around the hot pot for quite a while without managing to pick up what he wanted to eat. Finally, Pine decided to just do it for him.

Xiao Bai glanced at the beef tripe in his bowl before he turned to look at Pine.

Pine said, "Feeling sick?"

Xiao Bai shook his head and gave a tiny drunken burp. Then he leaned towards Pine and called, “P-baby.”

“Mn.”

Xiao Bai lowered his gaze and stared at the strings hanging down the front of Pine’s hoodie for a moment before he asked, “Are we dating?”

After they all ate and drank their fill, Ding-*ge* tracked down the server and paid the bill. Then he stood up and said, “Let’s go, it’s almost time for our reservation at the private karaoke room.”

“We won’t be going.” Pine got up, half-supporting Zhuang Yibai. “There’s something we have to go back and take care of.”

—

At the base, Pine brought Xiao Bai straight back to his room.

Pine set him down on the sofa before he went to make a cup of honey water.

Thanks to the car ride over, Xiao Bai had sobered up somewhat. He opened his mouth and said, “P-baby.”

“Mn.” Pine held the cup next to Xiao Bai’s mouth. “Drink this.”

Xiao Bai took a tiny sip.

Pine: “Drink it with the same attitude you were using to drink alcohol earlier.”

Xiao Bai: "…"

He drained the entire cup in one gulp.

Satisfied, Pine put the cup down on the table and finally asked, "What's the matter."

Xiao Bai tilted his head back to look up at him. "Hm?"

"We are dating." Using the pad of his finger, Pine wiped away the wet sheen at the corner of Xiao Bai's lips. "So what's the matter."

Xiao Bai blinked and contemplated for a while before he flashed a smile at him. "Actually, it's nothing much.

"It's just… I keep feeling like we're the same as we were before.

"Living together, eating together, playing games together." Xiao Bai paused. "Even the fans don't notice anything diff…"

He wasn't able to finish that sentence.

Pine stroked Xiao Bai's bangs back before he bent over and lowered his head to kiss him.

They had both consumed alcohol, so this kiss was flavored with a dry, clear bitterness. In the first place, Xiao Bai had drunk a bit too much, so his head instantly started spinning because of the kiss. He felt like he was floating.

When he was released, he could tell that Pine was tousling his hair a little forcefully, which sent tingles down the back of his neck.

Pine gazed down at him and said, “Did we do this before?”

Xiao Bai remembered the first time he ever met Pine: Pine was still shorter than him and looked just like a wimpy brat who wasn’t maturing well.

But now, with a single fleeting glance from Pine, Xiao Bai was pinned in place while his heartbeat went out of control.

He subconsciously swallowed. A few seconds passed before he realized what exactly he had just swallowed, and his face burned bright red. Then he raised his head and said, “Well, no…

“But didn’t you say that you do more than just kiss when you’re dating someone?”

Pine paused, and his fingers twitched slightly at his side.

“Don’t you want to give it a try?” The alcohol made Zhuang Yibai’s gaze even more bold and straightforward than usual. “I’ve already learned how to do it all.”

Pine looked at him. “Learned?”

Xiao Bai: “Okay, I didn’t learn anything, I just searched it up.”

And later that very night after he conducted the search, he had an extremely damn excessive dream.

Upon remembering the details from that dream, Zhuang Yibai couldn’t help but rub his face as his head cleared up a tiny bit.

Post-dream, he felt somewhat restless every time they kissed—but he seemed to be the only one who felt that way. After each kiss, Pine would wipe his mouth for him, and then they would return to how they normally interacted with each other as if nothing had happened.

Noticing Pine's silence, Zhuang Yibai understood now: apparently it was only his mind that was filled with those embarrassing, unspeakable thoughts.

A notification chimed from the phone lying on the desk, piercing through Zhuang Yibai's retrospective mortification. He instantly shot to his feet and mumbled to himself, "My phone…"

Someone grabbed his arm.

Pine's palm was scalding, so hot that it felt like the place he was gripping was about to catch on fire.

"What did you learn." Pine said, "Show me."

…

Half-reclined at the head of the bed, knees bent, Zhuang Yibai covered his eyes with one hand and braced his other hand against Pine's shoulder.

His cheeks and the outer corners of his eyes were all red, and sweat beaded on his forehead. He wanted to look, yet he didn't dare to.

While Pine's hand moved lower, he leaned over and kissed the back of Zhuang Yibai's hand. "Is this how you do it."

Zhuang Yibai randomly nodded a few times.

Pine: “If you don’t open your eyes, how do you know whether I’m doing it right or not.”

Even Zhuang Yibai’s neck was flushed. “…You can just do whatever, I think I don’t actually know that much all of a sudden.”

He heard Pine huff out a laugh before abruptly letting go of him.

Startled, Xiao Bai immediately opened his eyes—only to see the other man scoop up his jacket from the floor and pull out a few items from its pocket.

After discerning what those items were, Xiao Bai said, “When did you…”

“Before dinner, when I was buying cigarettes.”

Xiao Bai stared at him, stunned. His eyes were still tinged red. “So you did want to have sex with me after all.”

“…” For a second, Pine was rendered speechless. “No kidding.”

“Oh.” Xiao Bai blinked. “I thought that I was the only one thinking about that.”

No matter what he was doing, Zhuang Yibai always had a lot to say.

Pine had endured it for several years, but he finally found a way to put that to a stop today.

“What exactly did you search online?” Pine kneaded his toes.

“N-nothing much…” Xiao Bai’s voice was a little hoarse, and he replied to him in disjointed gasps. “It was all—really terrifying…”

“And you still wanted to do it with me?”

“…When I thought about… doing those things with you—I felt like… it wasn’t too bad.” Xiao Bai buried his face into the pillow. “You… don’t talk to me.”

……

By the time he woke up, the sky was already very bright outside.

Xiao Bai swept a look around him, eyes half-narrowed. The bed next to him was empty, and the sound of running water came from the bathroom.

Sensing his physical discomfort, he frowned and licked his lips before he picked up his phone to check his messages.

Messages from their group chat were at the very top of his notifications.

[Ding-*ge*: Auntie made some congee, everyone come down to eat breakfast. After that, let’s have a meeting.]

[Ding-*ge*: @All everyone awake?]

Everyone else responded quickly.

[Ding-*ge*: @P-Baby’s Little Support @Bye’s Cat Tower what about you two?]

[Ding-*ge*: ?]

Upon seeing that, Xiao Bai and Ding-*ge* were both equally confused—

[Ding-*ge*: @Bye's Cat Tower who the fuck is this???]

Xiao Bai threw off the blanket and got out of bed. After taking a single step, he sucked in a breath through his teeth due to the pain.

He walked over to the bathroom door with some difficulty and locked eyes with Pine, who had just finished washing up.

Pine: "Awake?"

Xiao Bai leaned against the door frame and spaced out for a few seconds. Then he lifted his phone and said, "Your WeChat username… you changed it?"

"Mn." Pine tugged down his towel and swiped it carelessly across his face. "Can you tell now?"

"What?"

"That we're dating."

—

Since nobody replied to his message, Ding-*ge* decided to just go upstairs to find them.

He reached the door to Pine's room. Right as he was about to raise his hand and knock, the door opened with a *creak*.

He came face-to-face with Zhuang Yibai.

Ding-*ge* was already very used to seeing this guy stay overnight in Pine's room. If this was any other time, perhaps he would've teased him with something like "*could you give your ADC a little freedom*," but today…

People probably wouldn't believe him if he said this out loud, but ever since their team's mid laner and jungler started dating, he seemed to have gained a new skill—visual gaydar.

Ding-*ge* looked Zhuang Yibai up and down. He was wearing Pine's shirt, so the collar gaped a little, revealing the countless spots dotting his neck…

Coincidentally, Pine exited the bathroom at that moment, his top half bare. The young man glanced coolly at both of them before he turned around and walked further into the room, exposing the merciless scratch marks lining the backs of his shoulders.

—

On that day, TTC wasn't able to hold their team meeting; it turned into a three-person discussion instead.

As for what kind of conversation was had during that meeting, nobody knew.

However, after the meeting concluded, Ding-*ge* smoked two packs of cigarettes on the balcony. Then, with trembling hands, he posted something on his Moments—

[Ding-*ge*: Someone else come be TTC's manager, *laozi* quits.]

—The End—

—

The author has something to say:

—P-Bai Little Theater (mini extra)—

The day before the All-Star event kicked off, Pine got a fever.

Holding his bedding, Xiao Bai snuck into Pine's room and spread another layer over Pine while prattling on nonstop:

"Aren't you a bit too bad at resisting the cold? You young people really have such weak constitutions.

"Let me go ask Ding-*ge* if you can miss the All-Star event tomorrow.

"I even pulled in votes for you for two weeks straight on Weibo, what a pity.

"Forget it, we can go next year too.

"How is it? Do you still feel cold? Has your fever gone down a little yet?"

Xiao Bai finished spreading the blanket over him. As he spoke, he leaned in towards Pine—who had remained silent this entire time, eyes half-closed—and pressed their foreheads together.

Xiao Bai: "I think…"

Before he could finish, Pine freed his arm from the blankets and cupped the back of Zhuang Yibai's head. Caught fully off guard, Zhuang Yibai tilted

downwards—

Though Pine's lips were mostly colorless, they felt somewhat hot. Xiao Bai froze for a moment before he tried to straighten up, but he was held firmly in place by the hand on the back of his head. The temperature on his tongue and lips grew even more heated and wet.

After the kiss, Zhuang Yibai's face was even redder than the sick person's.

Pine's voice was husky, and he licked his lips. "You're very warm."

Xiao Bai was briefly startled. "...Should I get under the blankets and warm you up?"

Without a word, Pine pulled back his blankets.

...

By the next day, Jiang Yusong had recovered.

But Zhuang Yibai got a fever instead.

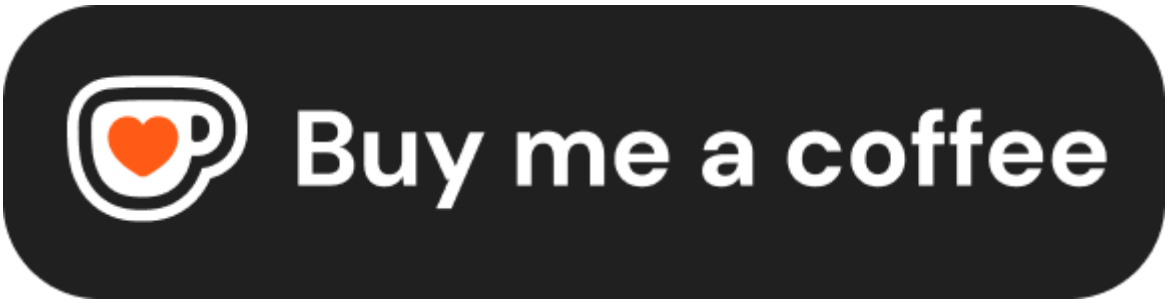
—End—

Translation Notes

1. *Shamate (杀马特): a loan word for "smart," describing a style in the 2000's that was a mix of glam rock + visual kei. The history and subculture of shamate is actually very interesting (this article goes more in depth).* ^

Yan: And that is a full wrap on ICDI! A little over a year to finish :') not too bad. I'll be going back and editing/cleaning up chapters eventually – I probably screwed up a lot of gaming terms tbh but hopefully not too badly. I will be buying the physical books for ICDI, so maybe one day I'll pop out a surprise update if there are any new extras. Other than that, thank you for reading!!! And join our discord for updates on future projects 😉

Wei: Ahhh can't believe we're completely done! Thanks again for following along with on ICDI's journey ♡ We hope to see you in any future projects as well!



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ICDI Extra 10: Come in, it's cold out there.

"Shutdown!"

The icy female voice rang through the headphones, and Jian Rong watched as the screen went gray in front of him. He tore off his headphones and tossed them onto the table before he picked up his milk and took a fierce gulp from it.

[No way no way? There's no way that there are actually pro players out there who will walk blindly into the brush despite knowing that the other team is nowhere to be found on the map?]

[Just retire already. You're really only good enough to be a third-rate streamer.]

[Tsk, you're so trash that I'm embarrassed to call myself your dad.]

"What?" Jian Rong opened up the in-game shop and said lazily, "Did the several thousand Challenger accounts in League all gather here in my livestream? Let me see." He clicked on the profile of a spectator who was furiously spamming insults in the barrage. When he saw the game account linked to the profile, he let out a sneer. "Ah, Black Rose server, ranked 'unyielding' Silver… You *are* pretty unyielding."

[…This is an invasion of God's privacy!]

"Why weren't you this bold with your claims when you were digging through my livestream's side account and invading your dad's privacy?"

Jian Rong moved his cursor. “I already suspected that there were people in the brush… I thought that it was just their mid laner and jungler, but it turned out that there were five of them.”

[You sure know how to make excuses for yourself.]

[Hm? Didn’t the little dumbass say that he wasn’t gonna stream on Christmas because he was gonna go out and have fun?]

[Why aren’t you duo Q’ing with Road today?]

Upon seeing that comment, Jian Rong couldn’t help but glance at the phone sitting on the table.

He had originally made plans with Lu Boyuan to go out and spend Christmas together, but one of the brands Lu Boyuan endorsed had a last minute marketing campaign that they needed him for. As a result, Lu Boyuan booked a flight at noon and went to Beijing.

Judging from the time, he should be there soon…

Ten minutes passed before the phone screen that Jian Rong had glanced at over and over finally lit up.

[Little Orange’s Daddy: I arrived.]

A moment later, a banner that only a livestream’s big boss could possess popped up pompously at the top of the stream—*TTC · Road has entered TTC · Soft’s livestream in a pumpkin carriage*.

Jian Rong was in the middle of heatedly reporting his teammates. However, the sound of his typing came to a stop the instant the banner appeared, and he deleted the mini essay in the text box soon after. Instead, he wrote out something plain and simple: *Player was boosted, too weak. Recommend banning the account.*

[Little Orange's Daddy: On the way to the photo shoot. Go ahead and stream, I'll just listen.]

Jian Rong went AFK from the game and picked up his phone to earnestly reply back to Lu Boyuan. When he looked up again, he saw that the barrage had grown displeased.

[What? Dad made time to watch your stream even while shopping with my girlfriend on Christmas. Am I here to watch you play on your phone?]

[AFKing to consume time, I've reported you. You can just wait for the super mod to come get you now.]

[Road's in the stream watching you, and you still have the balls to AFK? I see you have quite a lot of guts!]

"I was just responding to a message, you all are so annoying." Jian Rong put down his phone reluctantly. "I didn't AFK. I'm purposefully waiting a little before entering the queue, or else I'm going to run into those idiots again."

As Jian Rong entered a new game, he glanced at his teammates' usernames out of habit.

P-Baby's Little Support joined the lobby.

Jian Rong: "…"

Jian Rong turned his head and shot a look at the computer screen belonging to the person next to him. After confirming that Zhuang Yibai's assigned role was "top laner," Jian Rong shifted his mouse. "This game is over."

Xiao Bai had been eavesdropping for quite a while now, and he immediately took off his headphones. "Jian Rong! What's that supposed to mean!"

"Look at your match history as a top laner—it's two pages of red. Even those noobs in my stream are shaking their heads at that. You don't want to see those esports marketing accounts writing articles tomorrow about how 'TTC's mid laner and support joined hands to passionately give a huge Christmas gift to Ionia's Challenger players,' do you?" Jian Rong said, "Can't you go duo queue with your ADC? Don't screw over other people."

"You think I wouldn't rather do that? P-baby has other training tasks today, and I also have to fulfill my streaming quota since it's the end of the month. Otherwise I definitely wouldn't be out here getting wronged like this in solo queue!"

—

Jian Rong didn't feel like listening to Xiao Bai's nonsense, and his cursor was already hovering over the X button.

Zhuang Yibai: "No way no way? You can't even carry me? Are you that afraid of losing? Can't afford to lose?"

Jian Rong laughed coldly. “As if you can provoke me.”

“I didn’t provoke you at all.” Zhuang Yibai crossed his arms over his chest as he commented nonchalantly, “Forget it, go ahead and leave. I also feel like you won’t be able to carry me… After all, there aren’t many LPL mid laners left these days who are capable of winning three games in a row while carrying me in top lane, not the way Savior can.”

Two minutes later, TTC’s mid laner and support successfully entered the same game.

Jian Rong bought his starter items and left the base. “Try not to feed so much in the top lane.”

“Are you looking down on me?” Zhuang Yibai said, “Just wait and see, I’m definitely going to have more kills and gold than you by the end of this round.”

Jian Rong let out an “*en*.” “At least it doesn’t cost money to talk big.”

“…Let’s make a bet then. If you get more kills than me, I’ll change my game username to ‘Soft Is My Dad’ for a whole week. If I get more kills than you…”

“Sure.” There was no need to listen to a scenario that would never happen, so Jian Rong instantly cut him off. “Get ready to buy a name change.”

Seven minutes into the game, Jian Rong had effortlessly grinded the opposing mid laner down to low health. After locking in on an opening, he

immediately flashed and prepared to get the kill—then, the game interface froze.

Jian Rong: "?"

He turned to look at Zhuang Yibai's screen. Zhuang Yibai's Renekton was still being vigorously thrashed in the top lane, and the announcement that Jian Rong's character had been killed appeared on the other person's screen a few seconds later.

Jian Rong: "???"

Jian Rong's game crashed.

He was connected to the same internet as Zhuang Yibai; they were using the same computer brand; and they had entered the same game together. Yet even though his game crashed, Zhuang Yibai was still getting beat up in the top lane.

From beginning to end, Jian Rong wasn't able to get back into the game.

The game ultimately finished with the following scores: 0/1/0 for Jian Rong, 1/6/4 for Zhuang Yibai.

"Good match, good match." Zhuang Yibai cupped his fists and said, "Sorry to say it, but that's a narrow victory for me—by the margin of one kill."

Both of their stream barrages were cracking up. Jian Rong stared at him in disbelief. "That counts?"

“Why wouldn’t it count?” Zhuang Yibai said, “Don’t tell me you’re going to back out of this bet in front of several hundred thousand spectators? What are they going to think of you after this?”

Jian Rong shrugged, completely unbothered. “Who cares…”

“My *ge* is also in the stream! Are you trying to back out in front of my *ge*? That means from now on, my *ge*’s going to see you as a man whose words can’t be trusted!”

Jian Rong: “…”

Despite the abrupt cue, Lu Boyuan didn’t respond, even though he was idling in the stream. It wasn’t clear if he just wasn’t saying anything or if he was already in the middle of his shoot.

After a lengthy pause, Jian Rong grinded his teeth together and said, “…I’m not changing my username.”

“I wasn’t going to make you do that.” Zhuang Yibai smiled triumphantly. “All you have to do is play this two-player game with me. I promised my fans I would play it a while ago, but Pine wouldn’t do it with me, so I’ve been delaying it for a long time now.”

Jian Rong checked the time. He had streamed enough for the month, so he said bluntly, “Fine. Let’s play the game right now. The earlier we start, the earlier we finish.”

Ten minutes later, there was a new game icon on Jian Rong’s computer desktop.

It was a picture of a woman's face on a red background. Upon closer inspection, a bloody red tear was visible at the corner of her eye. Two large words were written underneath the icon: Dielight Hospital.

Zhuang Yibai: "Which character do you want to be? The reporter or the cameraman?"

Jian Rong: "…"

When there was no response, Zhuang Yibai swiveled his head around and saw Jian Rong's wavering mouse. "You're not scared, are you? Do you not have the guts to play horror games? Are you that much of a coward?"

"Impossible…" Jian Rong licked his lips as his eyes shifted around aimlessly. "Like hell I'm scared."

Zhuang Yibai: "Then hurry up and register so you can join my party."

Jian Rong opened up the game. Eerie background music filtered in through his headphones, accompanied by a woman's quiet, occasional sob.

Jian Rong: "…"

He turned down the volume.

[Hahahahaha, you totally are afraid of ghosts!!!]

[This has been the most popular horror game lately. Savior just played it yesterday, and he cleared it in three hours. You really can't tell, especially with how clueless and oblivious he typically is, but he's not afraid of this sort of thing at all.]

[You can't judge a book by its cover. This dumbass constantly spits out insults every day, but look at how terrified he is now.]

"Who's terrified? As if I would be scared of this?" Jian Rong unconsciously puffed out his chest a little. "Dad usually watches horror movies for dinner, got it?"

Three minutes after the game started, Jian Rong was so frightened by the sudden appearance of a "ghostly shadow" that his entire body jolted backwards, causing his gaming chair to roll back shamefully with his momentum.

Jian Rong's heart was pounding in his ears, but his face remained expressionless. "My foot slipped."

Seventeen minutes in, continuous knocking erupted in his headphones. It seemed to originate from one place, as if someone really was knocking violently on the door behind him.

Jian Rong removed his headphones, and his voice trembled slightly as he said, "Too damn loud, I'm not wearing these anymore."

Thirty minutes in, the "ghost" delivered an up-close jumpscare.

Jian Rong abruptly quivered from head to toe and minimized the game interface at the speed of light.

[???]

[Hahaha the dumbass is so scared that his eyes are nearly closed hahaha! Honestly, let's just give up here if you're timid? There's no need for someone to play this game if they can't even see it, there's really no need.]

[Amazing, I didn't even get to see what the ghost looked like before the game was minimized. This is the strength of my son's hand speed.]

[Just give it up. It's not that hard to acknowledge being a coward, you can stop playing.]

[Just give it up. It's true that even Doufu cleared this game, but you can close it if you really can't take it anymore.]

[Just give it up. The only consequence is that you'll be known as the LPL's #1 Coward in the future, right? You're always subject to a good amount of swearing anyway, what's one more insult?]

Jian Rong: "..."

As pale as a sheet, Jian Rong sat back down in his seat. "I was acting just now. Not scared. For the stream. Why would I lie to you? Look, aren't you all spamming the barrage for me? I said that I was acting... Let's play, why wouldn't I play? Continue."

Zhuang Yibai was about to lose his mind from holding back his laughter. "You really wanna continue? Don't force yourself. Even though this is what I requested because you lost to me, if you really can't take it I can always go ask Savior to play with me..."

Jian Rong: "Continue."

This was a game that took three hours to clear, but because of Jian Rong's various pauses, the duration was forcefully extended to five hours.

His blue hair was already thoroughly tousled, and there was an ugly expression on his face. When he saw the barrage say that there were only two checkpoints left, he couldn't help but heave a furtive sigh.

[Watch out watch out watch out!!!]

[This last jumpscare is super terrifying! I couldn't sleep well for over a week after I saw it!!]

[Help! I also remember this part. This game is popular purely because of these last few horror scenes!!!]

[It's here! It's coming!]

[Son, you should just close your eyes! Isn't it uncomfortable squinting like that?]

Jian Rong gritted his teeth and straightened upright. Then, he opened his eyes wide and clenched his fists in preparation to meet this game's final attack.

"Ahhh!!!" As a sharp and piercing female voice rang through his headphones, Jian Rong's world went dark.

A large hand covered his eyes.

Jian Rong listened to the female ghost shriek in his ears, slightly stunned.

The owner of the hand had just come in from outside, so his palm was a bit chilly, and he carried the scent of the cold wind on him.

Upon seeing the newcomer, Zhuang Yibai called out in surprise, "*Ge*."

"Mn." Lu Boyuan only removed his hand once the horrifying scene had vanished entirely from the computer screen. After that, he ruffled Jian Rong's hair. "What are you doing here, if you're not practicing?"

Jian Rong was still dazed. "I'm done with practice, so I'm… playing something else."

"To the point of not even checking your phone?"

Since the game was too thrilling, Jian Rong truly didn't have time to look at his phone. He picked it up and saw that Lu Boyuan had messaged him several hours ago, telling him not to play that game.

"…I didn't hear the notification go off." Jian Rong snapped out of it and turned his head to ask, "How come you're back here?"

Lu Boyuan walked over to his own computer. "I didn't have anything else to do in Beijing, so I came back after the shoot."

Jian Rong responded blankly, "Oh."

As Lu Boyuan removed his scarf and jacket, he noticed that the other person was still staring at him. "Why are you spacing out?"

"Ah, it's nothing."

“Are you still going to keep that game open?” Lu Boyuan said, “Let’s duo queue.”

Jian Rong immediately exited the game. “Okay, be right there.”

After clearing the horror game, Zhuang Yibai leaned back in his chair with extreme satisfaction. As he looked at the game interface, he suddenly thought of something, and he twisted around to tug at Pine’s shirt. “P-baby, P-baby.”

Pine was practicing last hitting, so he didn’t look over. “Speak.”

“This game is way too scary! I don’t dare to sleep by myself tonight anymore!” Zhuang Yibai pressed his palms together. “Please take me in for the night.”

Pine stopped and shot him a glance.

“I’ll definitely sleep quietly and peacefully! I won’t disturb you! Please? Or else I’ll really be so terrified that my eyes will stay open until dawn, which means tomorrow’s practice will be screwed, and next month’s competition too. Then all the haters on the internet are going to curse me out…”

“…It’s up to you.”

“Good people will live good lives!”

—

After practice, Yuan Qian came out of the shower and laid down on his bed to stare at the ceiling for a while.

Several seconds later, the face of the female ghost that he accidentally caught a glimpse of earlier in the evening materialized on the ceiling.

Yuan Qian had been terrified of this kind of thing ever since he was a kid, and his heart violently skipped a beat as he sat bolt upright in bed.

How scary.

Way too scary.

This wouldn't do. If things continued like this, his eyes would be open until daylight.

Yuan Qian glanced at the goodnight message that his girlfriend had sent him half an hour earlier. He hesitated briefly before he ultimately ended up dispelling the thought of asking her to video call with him.

Perhaps he should be like Xiao Bai and find someone to sleep with for the night?

He was even fine with sleeping on the floor!

Maybe the captain then, especially since his room just happened to be a bit bigger than everyone else's. Yuan Qian would be comfortable even if he slept on the ground.

After making up his mind, Yuan Qian nimbly got up to gather his pillow and blankets. Then he opened his door—and shuddered in fright because of the figure in the hallway.

There was only one light turned on in the hallway. With lingering fear, Yuan Qian looked a little closer at the silhouette.

Fortunately, it wasn't a female ghost.

It was his captain.

Hand curled around the doorknob, Jian Rong stared outside his room in shock at Lu Boyuan, who was clad in pajamas and had a pillow in his arms.

"May I? That scene was too frightening, I still haven't forgotten it," Lu Boyuan said with utter calmness. "I can just sleep on the floor."

"…" Jian Rong pulled open the door. "You may… Come in, it's cold out there."

Lu Boyuan walked into Jian Rong's room, and the door closed behind him.

Yuan Qian was left standing there alone in extreme bemusement while still hugging his blanket and pillow in his arms.

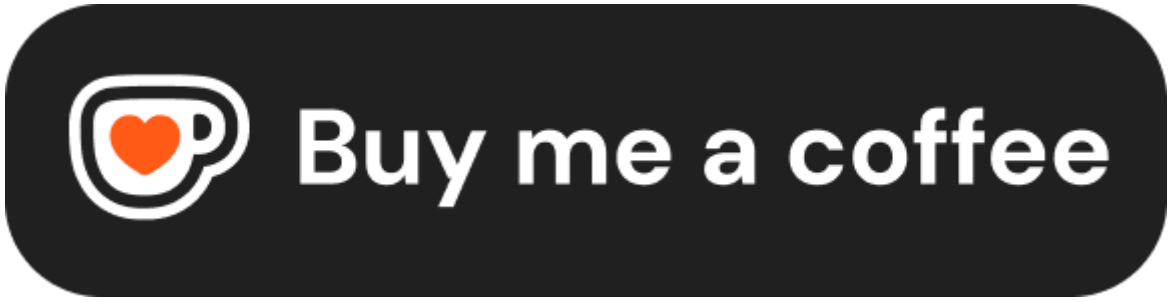
He looked at Jian Rong's door, and then he looked at Pine's door.

Why?

Why?!

Outsiders aren't allowed to stay overnight at the base—that rule must be targeting me, right???!!

Yan: Surprise! This is a new extra that came with ICDI's physical books. ICDI has always been my comfort TL, and it feels good to translate it one last time. :') Once again my search history is filled with random League-related things lolol I hope our beloved dumbass son brightens your day! And I hope you're all doing well ^^ till next time!



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ICDI Extra 11: Ding-ge's Diary – Nightmare Holiday

Source: JZB's Weibo (05.06.2023)

—

On the third day of the Labor Day break, Zhuang Yibai was besieged by the barrage the instant he started his stream.

This was mainly because the frequency of his streams had recently begun to plummet.

As the TTC member most fond of streaming, Zhuang Yibai had once set an impressive record of streaming for 31 days straight during a month with no competitions.

If a teammate was streaming, he could appear up to ten times in the frame to say hello to the barrage.

There were even times when he would start a stream just to chat idly with the fans if he got bored while doing something outside—

However, from the start of the spring season until now—which was almost four months—such an LPL-renowned attention-seeker had only streamed twenty times in total.

Zhuang Yibai tried to bluff his way out of it quietly. "No way, I had to have streamed at least thirty times, okay."

The fans swiftly and efficiently tossed the proof into the barrage: the dates of all his streams in the past four months, the length of each stream, and so on. In a flash, it covered the screen.

"Fine, I did stream a *tiiiny* bit less. Why? Well, the reason is…"

Zhuang Yibai glanced guiltily at the person sitting next to him before looking back at the stream. "—Of course it's because of our team's mid laner!

"People are affected by their surroundings. You tell me, hasn't Jian Rong been getting lazier and lazier these days? He hasn't streamed a single time during these past few months, has he? A couple days ago, he even ended up on the hot search since his fans cursed him out so much—how am I supposed to summon up the energy to work hard with this kind of person next to me all day long?!"

[?]

[I'm used to seeing pro players push the blame onto their teammates because they performed poorly in a competition, but this is my first time seeing someone push the blame onto their teammate for something like slacking off and not streaming.]

[I see that TTC is as united as ever.]

[Fucking hell, why couldn't you be the one influencing him?!!?]

[I hate this. I hate this so much. That damn brat hasn't streamed for over 70 days now. Like a lost, wandering dad, I've floated through StarTV for two

months…]

[Don’t worry everyone, I spent money on a fortune teller yesterday. That person divined that our son would stream tomorrow.]

[The Weibo IPs refreshed just now. Soft and Road’s IPs both show Shandong, and apparently someone saw them eating BBQ in Zibo. The sister above me, maybe you should file a report with the police and get them to lock away that fortune teller instead.]

[OK, I suppose I can accept this excuse. But then why have you stopped posting in your Weibo supertopic #P-baby’s little dainty support~#?]

#P-baby’s little dainty support~# was a Weibo supertopic initially created by the fans.

The supertopic didn’t originally have a lot of followers, and even half a month wasn’t enough to generate many new posts.

Later on, Zhuang Yibai himself somehow chanced upon the supertopic. With a shake of his head, he said, “Your pictures are way too blurry, how are other people supposed to appreciate them like this?” And so he rolled up his sleeves and proceeded to take matters into his own hands. He applied to become the moderator of the supertopic and began to occasionally post pictures of him and Pine in it.

The other person was usually expressionless in the photos; sometimes, he was frowning and wouldn’t even look at the camera. But that did nothing to hinder the fact that this was, in fact, something a lot of people could ship. To date, the number of supertopic followers had already reached six digits.

The supertopic grew more and more popular with each passing day, yet the moderator decided to step back and quit. At some unknown point in time, all traces of TTC · Bye abruptly vanished from the supertopic.

Shaking his mouse, Zhuang Yibai couldn't help but think back on the contents of his password-protected photos from these past few months.

Every single one of those pictures would get him killed ten times by Ding-*ge* if he posted it.

How was he supposed to post them! There was no way to post them!

What's more, Ding-*ge* had instructed them to keep a low profile these days. After all, four out of five of their members were gay—it was indeed starting to push the limits of what the LPL officials and brand sponsors could accept.

"…Of course there's a reason for that. I just suddenly… suddenly…" Zhuang Yibai racked his brains for a moment before an idea flashed through his mind and he slapped the table. "I just suddenly thought that what everyone was saying made a ton of sense!"

[?]

"If I'm constantly posting pictures of me and Pine, it really does seem like I'm trying to get fans by selling rot! As a professional player, how can I exhibit such wrong, childish, and malicious behavior?!"

[???]

“This is basically the esports’ version of unfair competition! I feel like I acted very improperly in the past! And so, upon deeper reflection of that painful time, I decided that I would never post content like that again!”

[??????]

“P-baby and I will work even harder in competitions from now on! We will do our best to use our dazzling plays to gain even more fans for this team! For the LPL! For this industry!”

After that, Zhuang Yibai nudged the person sitting next to him. “I articulated that well, didn’t I? P-baby?”

“Not bad.”

Jiang Yusong was in the middle of a ranked game, but his headphones were only over one ear. He shifted his fingers and hit ‘B’ to return to base before he picked up the water bottle in front of him and placed it on the neighboring desk. “Drink some water before you continue.”

Zhuang Yibai twisted open the water bottle that Pine had already half-finished and took a few gulps from it.

All of the water friends in the stream were still dumbstruck, and question marks floated across the barrage for two minutes straight—

[??? Your moment of enlightenment really was pretty fucking sudden]

[Everything you just said was as ridiculous as my graduation thesis.]

[Pine is playing ranked right now? He won't even stream when he's playing ranked?? Did he get that from Soft too???]

[You spoke very sincerely. I don't believe a single punctuation mark.]

[Who knows. Even when he was posting pictures of the two of them filled with photoshopped hearts, I didn't think there was anything between them. But now, such a sudden avoidance…]

"Alrighty! I'll stream more diligently from now on." Zhuang Yibai quickly opened the game and jumped to another topic of conversation almost evasively. "P-baby's game is about to finish. In just a bit, League's number one support is going to show you all his newly learned Zed support."

—

Jian Rong was still in the barbeque stand when he received Savior's message.

[Savior: You were backstabbed[1] by Bye~! In his stream.]

[Savior: Don't expose me to Bye, okay! I only told you secretly because we're bros!]

Lu Boyuan brought a freshly-grilled lamb skewer to Jian Rong's mouth and said, "Have a taste."

Jian Rong stuffed the entire skewer into his mouth. With bulging cheeks, he gave his assessment: "Yummy." Then he asked, "What does 'backstab' mean?"

“To be stabbed in the back with a knife, probably.” Lu Boyuan asked, “Why?”

I see.

But what was there to backstab between him and Zhuang Yibai? Didn’t they stab each other outright every day?

“It’s nothing, apparently PUD’s mid laner doesn’t have anything better to do again.” Jian Rong muttered, “Who’s teaching him all this useless internet slang all the time.”

Despite saying that, he still joined Zhuang Yibai’s stream.

As soon as he entered, he immediately tripped over the barrage—

[What? My CP is denying rumors and trying to avoid suspicion? No worries, I can create rumors. Do you know why Zhuang Yibai didn’t stream this Lunar New Year to trick red envelope money out of everyone? It was because he spent it at Jiang Yusong’s this year.]

[Do you know why he didn’t stream like he had in the past during this year’s spring season banquet celebrating their tournament win? It was because he and Jiang Yusong also went to get a room, right next to the Road and Soft’s.]

[My colleague is a staff member. She told me that every time TTC travels for a competition, they only book three rooms. One for the mid laner and jungler, one for the bot lane, and one for Qian-*ge* by himself. Poor Qian-*ge*.]

[Poor Qian-*ge*.]

[Poor Qian-*ge*.]

[I saw you and Jiang Yusong at the amusement park in the beginning of January. Both of you were wearing cartoon-themed headbands, and you went to eat midnight snacks afterwards. Then both of you got in Jiang Yusong's car and stayed there for over an hour.]

[What a magical car. It can even shake on its own.]

[I recorded everything that happened in that hour, and I'm gonna post it on the internet soon. All you have to do is wait for the wedding now.]

[What the hell, why is my son in the stream?! Let me see his IP—he really is in fucking Shandong. Damn brat!]

Nonsense.

They always booked five rooms every time they traveled for a competition!

And most of their time was spent in the practice room anyway.

It was fine if they wanted to make up lies about Zhuang Yibai, but why drag him into it too?

He was already annoyed from waiting in line for two hours!

Just as Jian Rong was about to start typing out insults, Lu Boyuan asked, "How do the water friends know that they went to the amusement park in January?"

Jian Rong paused and cast his mind back—

“I think I mentioned it during one of my streams.”

At the start of the new year, the team gave everyone a day off. Lu Boyuan was out of the city for a hand-related check-up, and Jian Rong couldn’t sleep. As a result, he stayed in the practice room until two in the morning; that was when the sound of a car’s engine traveled in from outside the base. At the time, the water friends had asked him what the noise was, and he had responded without much thought after checking for himself.

“Pine’s car, it’s our bot lane. It’s so late, where did they go…? The amusement park, and then they probably went to eat midnight snacks. Which amusement park? The biggest one. They’re also both wearing cartoon-themed headbands, how childish.”

All he did was casually answer their questions, yet those people remembered all of that until May?

The game on the screen just happened to end then. Carrying Zhuang Yibai’s 1/8/3 Zed, Pine managed to secure the victory with great difficulty.

After closing the scoreboard, Pine informed him coolly, “If I see this champion again, you can solo bot.”

“How can you say such a thing to your boy—” Xiao Bai screeched to a halt mid-sentence. “Your bro, your support?!”

“Mhm. Even if Buddha himself came to play support for me,” Pine said. “It still can’t be Zed.”

“…”

Xiao Bai, who had played dead in the stream for the entire game, finally unearthed his head from the sand. He turned to look at the barrage and began to belatedly clear things up.

“Hey hey hey, don’t just make things up. During the New Year break, I was putting in extra hours of training for the spring season. No one from our team went home.

“I didn’t stream during the celebratory banquet because my phone was confiscated by that hateful mid laner of ours. What a domineering guy he is! Since everyone’s already here, let me ask something—can I report him to the police for that?

“Pine and I always have our own rooms during competitions. Of course, I don’t know if I can say the same for our mid laner and jungler~

“Amusement park? Amusement park?? Amusement—”

Jian Rong had already passionately typed out 128 characters in the barrage comment box when his earbuds abruptly went dead silent. It was as if the person in the stream had suddenly lost his voice, despite his nonchalant and unbothered attitude from just a moment earlier. There wasn’t even the sound of breathing.

Jian Rong looked up, puzzled.

On his phone screen, their support looked extremely shocked. He sat there frozen in his seat, utterly motionless; not even his mouse was moving

anymore.

After almost half a minute of that, Pine's voice sounded through the earbuds. "Are you going to start the game?"

Zhuang Yibai snapped out of his daze. With eyes as wide as saucers and ears that were about to burst into flames, he frantically went to click on the 'mute' button.

Immediately after, he lifted his hand to cover his mouth as he grabbed the person next to him, pale with fright. "P-baby, it-it-it—it's over!!!"

Why could Jian Rong still hear him?

His eyes flicked up. Sure enough, Zhuang Yibai's mic was still on; he had missed the 'mute' button.

How are you a pro esports player with such shaky hands?

"What's wrong." Jiang Yusong looked down. "Why are you covering your mouth?"

"I'm afraid that the water friends will be able to figure out what I'm saying. Didn't Ding-*ge* fine that dumbass ten thousand *yuan* last time because he muted his mic to insult someone but his fans read his lips?"

Jian Rong deleted the "*you didn't mute your mic*" comment that he had just typed out and changed it to "*get lost dumbass*."

"Wh—w-w-what do we do?" For the first time ever, Zhuang Yibai was stuttering because he was so nervous. "T-that day at the amusement park,

w-w-w—we were c-c—caught on video…"

Jian Rong: "…"

Lu Boyuan, who was wearing Jian Rong's other earbud: "…"

Jiang Yusong: "Which part?"

Zhuang Yibai: "The part in your car…"

The two of them stared at each other silently for a short while.

Zhuang Yibai's phone started ringing on the table. He checked to see who was calling and instantly hung up. "Oh no, it's D-D-D-Ding-*ge*! He definitely saw that comment in the barrage. W-w-w-what do we do? Maybe we should just m-m-make a run for it now before he's back?"

There was the sound of a chair being pushed back, and Pine's tall, slender figure half-entered the frame. "I'll go pack our bags."

"O—o-okay, I'll come after I trick the water friends."

Right as Pine was turning to leave, Zhuang Yibai latched onto the corner of his shirt and instructed him, "Take the plushies that we bought from the amusement park too, the ones at the head of my bed. I'm scared Ding-*ge* will vent his anger out on them."

"Mn. I'll wait for you in the car."

The practice room door closed behind him.

Zhuang Yibai drew in a deep breath. It felt like he and P-baby were Romeo and Juliet, about to elope.

Once he had calmed his racing heart, he licked his lips and went to unmute himself—

Through the phone screen, Jian Rong and Zhuang Yibai—who had essentially turned into stone in front of the camera—stared at each other for a very, very long time. After countless minutes had ticked by, an utterly lost and defeated sigh-like sound finally traveled through Jian Rong's earbuds.

Zhuang Yibai: "Ah."

—

When Jian Rong exited the stream, there were over fifty messages waiting for him in WeChat.

They were all from his team's group chat.

He didn't dare to open it.

Lu Boyuan placed a purple rice cake in front of him. "I extended our hotel stay for another night. We can go back a day later."

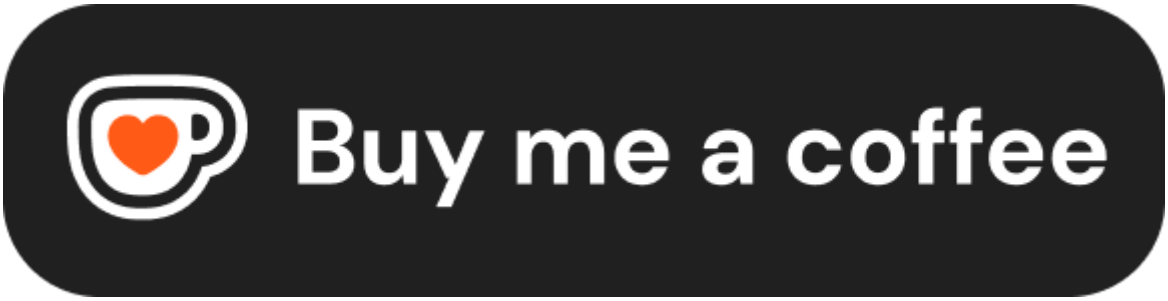
"Mn." Jian Rong swallowed the food in his mouth and said, "Do you think our team will still exist by the time we go back?"

"Maybe."

Translation Notes

1. *For context – I guess backstab wasn't really a thing in Chinese prior to it becoming internet slang recently.* ^

Yan: I translated this last year when JZB released it on Weibo, but only kept it on gdocs within the TS discord cuz I was too lazy to post it haha. But since JZB has included it as an official extra on JJWXC I figured it would make more sense to post it here, for anyone looking for it. Hope you all enjoy! P-Bai ♡ what dummies



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64. ICDI Chapter 63: You ganked my ADC so many times, what did I ever do to you? (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-63/)
65. ICDI Chapter 64: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-64/)
66. ICDI Chapter 65: As long as he didn't act awkward, Lu Boyuan would be the one to feel awkward. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-65/)
67. ICDI Chapter 66: I just like to pay fines. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-66/)
68. ICDI Chapter 67: I don't have any girls that I like. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-67/)
69. ICDI Chapter 68: It's very normal to date. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-68/)
70. ICDI Chapter 69: There was something wrong with his thoughts. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-69/)
71. ICDI Chapter 70: You can try having that meaning. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-70/)
72. ICDI Chapter 71: The boss crooked his finger and came to aid the poor esports circle. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-71/)
73. ICDI Chapter 72: Jian Rong had an impulsive temper and spoke harshly. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-72/)
74. ICDI Chapter 73: ! (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-73/)
75. ICDI Chapter 74: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-74/)
76. ICDI Chapter 75: TTCvsPUD (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-75/)
77. ICDI Chapter 76: TTCvsPUD (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-76/)
78. ICDI Chapter 77: Someone in the team is a picky eater. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-77/)

79. ICDI Chapter 78: I thought I was coaxing you. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-78/)
80. ICDI Chapter 79: “No butterflies challenge, esports male gods version” (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-79/)
81. ICDI Chapter 80: Little Orange is so blessed to have two dads. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-80/)
82. ICDI Chapter 81: Do you have a guy that you like? (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-81/)
83. ICDI Chapter 82: I like you. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-82/)
84. ICDI Chapter 83: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-83/)
85. ICDI Chapter 84: Yes, they were dating. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-84/)
86. ICDI Chapter 85: These are Road’s exclusive runes. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-85/)
87. ICDI Chapter 86: Too bad my son only dates in the workplace and not online. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-86/)
88. ICDI Chapter 87: Jian Rong tasted the flavor of orange candy. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-87/)
89. ICDI Chapter 88: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-88/)
90. ICDI Chapter 89: Hurry up and take your mid laner away. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-89/)
91. ICDI Chapter 90: #Soft’s stream was arrested by Road# (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-90/)
92. ICDI Chapter 91: The second ointment is more effective. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-91/)
93. ICDI Chapter 92: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-92/)
94. ICDI Chapter 93: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-93/)
95. ICDI Chapter 94: I’m saving it so the person I like can spend it. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-94/)
96. ICDI Chapter 95: Shut up, trash. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-95/)
97. ICDI Chapter 96: Jian Rong felt like he was about to leave the earth. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-96/)
98. ICDI Chapter 97: ? (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-97/)

99. ICDI Chapter 98: ? (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-98/)
100. ICDI Chapter 99: My partner is managing my WeChat. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-99/)
101. ICDI Chapter 100: Wasn't I being quite stingy back then? (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-100/)
102. ICDI Chapter 101: Flamers are so easy to please. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-101/)
103. ICDI Chapter 102: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-102/)
104. ICDI Chapter 103: Penta kill. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-103/)
105. ICDI C104: Diehard point grubber. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-104/)
106. ICDI Chapter 105: But I like you, and I don't think that you're cute. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-105/)
107. ICDI Chapter 106: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-106/)
108. ICDI Chapter 107: It's fine as long as I like it. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-107/)
109. ICDI Chapter 108: Normally people wouldn't act like this, right?? (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-108/)
110. ICDI Chapter 109: Pre-game trash talk. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-109/)
111. ICDI Chapter 110: Online dating combo meal. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-110/)
112. ICDI Chapter 111: To help boost your energy. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-111/)
113. ICDI Chapter 112: After the match, you can send me shampoo for two days (?) (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-112/)
114. ICDI Chapter 113: Our first championship win. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-113/)
115. ICDI Chapter 114: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-114/)
116. ICDI Chapter 115: Eating vinegar. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-115/)
117. ICDI Chapter 116: I, Zhuang Yibai, have never been so speechless in my twenty-plus years of life. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-116/)
118. ICDI Chapter 117: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-117/)

119. ICDI Chapter 118: . (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-118/)
120. ICDI Chapter 119: When we're dating, we definitely can't be outdone by the other person (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-119/)
121. ICDI Chapter 120: Mind your own business, I'm your dad—Soft (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-120/)
122. ICDI Chapter 121: I really should learn from TTC in all respects! (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-121/)
123. ICDI Chapter 122: A dog barking because of its master's power. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-122/)
124. ICDI Chapter 123: I've already forgotten what you looked like sitting in the fountain four years ago. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-123/)
125. ICDI Chapter 124: Group stage match, first win. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-124/)
126. ICDI Chapter 125: Chronobreak. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-125/)
127. ICDI Chapter 126: Isn't your mid laner a little too freaking arrogant. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-126/)
128. ICDI Chapter 127: Watch gege carry you to victory. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-127/)
129. ICDI Chapter 128: [Daddy's here, play well] (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-128/)
130. ICDI Chapter 129: Trash. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-129/)
131. ICDI Chapter 130: This is the vanishing health bar technique! (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-130/)
132. ICDI Chapter 131: Do you need to pause? (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-131/)
133. ICDI Chapter 132: 3:0 (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-132/)
134. ICDI Chapter 133: My solo kill today… was it handsome. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-133/)
135. ICDI Chapter 134: Stay true to yourself. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-134/)
136. ICDI Extra 1: Bitter tea. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e1/)
137. ICDI Extra 2: I know. I won't curse at anyone… I definitely won't curse at anyone. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e2/)
138. ICDI Extra 3: (Side CP – P-Bai) Shouldn't a young person like you have a lot of body heat? (https://tinysalttranslations.com/about/icdi-e3/)

139. ICDI Extra 4: (Side CP – P-Bai) Hahahahahahaha! Your ADC doesn't want you anymore! (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e4/)
140. ICDI Extra 5: (Side CP – P-Bai) Don't sell rot on purpose anymore. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e5/)
141. ICDI Extra 6: (Side CP – P-Bai) "Jiang Yusong, you're not human." (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e6/)
142. ICDI Extra 7: (Side CP – P-Bai) Dumbass. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e7/)
143. ICDI Extra 8: (Side CP – P-Bai) I like you. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e8/)
144. ICDI Extra 9: (Side CP – P-Bai) Someone else come be TTC's manager, laozi quits. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e9/)
145. ICDI Extra 10: Come in, it's cold out there. (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e10/)
146. ICDI Extra 11: Ding-ge's Diary – Nightmare Holiday (https://tinysalttranslations.com/novels/completed/icdi/icdi-e11/)